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HOLIDAY BAKING ISSUE

bake FROM SCRATCH®

VANILLA-RED VELVET LAYER CAKE
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Make-Ahead Brunch Ideas

Holiday Cakes

Celebrate with Festive Twists on **1-2-3-4 Cake**

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LE GIBASSIER

A French bread from Provence, the gibassier is flavored with anise, candied orange peel, and orange blossom water. Cut and shaped to resemble a leaf, our Le Gibassier loaves rise in record time thanks to Platinum® Yeast from Red Star®.

Makes 8 small loaves

- 2⅓ to 2⅔ cups (296 to 338 grams) bread flour, divided
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 2 (0.25-ounce) packages (14 grams) Platinum Yeast
- 2 teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt
- ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) plus ⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger, divided
- ¼ cup (60 grams) whole milk
- 3 tablespoons (42 grams) olive oil
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 2½ teaspoons (12.5 grams) orange blossom water
- ¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened and divided
- ½ cup (72 grams) finely chopped candied orange
- 1½ teaspoons (4.5 grams) anise seeds

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 1 cup (127 grams) flour, ⅓ cup (67 grams) sugar, yeast, salt, ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) cardamom, and ¼ teaspoon ginger at low speed until combined.

2. In a medium saucepan, heat milk and oil over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add milk mixture to flour mixture; beat at low speed just until combined and yeast dissolves, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs and orange blossom water; beat at medium-low speed just until combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add 1⅓ cups (169 grams) flour, beating just until combined.

3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at medium-low speed until dough is smooth, elastic, and pulls away from sides of bowl, 7 to 10 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl; add up to remaining ⅓ cup (42 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if dough is too sticky.

4. With mixer on low speed, add ¼ cup (57 grams) butter, 1 tablespoon (14 grams) at a time, beating until combined after each addition (6 to 8 minutes total), stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook. Increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until a smooth, elastic dough forms, 6 to 7 minutes, stopping to scrape dough hook. (Dough should pass the windowpane test. [See Note.]) Beat in candied orange and anise seeds until combined. Turn out dough onto a clean surface; knead 6 to 10 times to help evenly disperse candied orange and anise seeds. Transfer dough to a medium bowl. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 1½ to 2½ hours.

5. Punch down dough; let stand for 5 minutes. Turn out dough onto a clean surface, and divide into 8 portions (about 92 grams each); shape into balls, pinching seams closed as needed. Cover with plastic wrap, and let stand for 25 minutes.

6. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

7. Roll each dough ball into a 3½-inch-long log; flatten and shape into about 4½x3-inch ovals (about ¼ inch thick). Place long side of dough ovals parallel to counter edge; using sharp kitchen shears or scissors, cut 3 slits crosswise and equally spaced within each oval, leaving about ½ to ¾ inch of dough intact on each side. Along one long side of each oval, cut ½- to ¾-inch-long slits, evenly spaced, to the side of each original center slit. Stretch dough gently just to open cuts; place on prepared pans. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until dough is puffed and holds an indentation when pressed with a finger, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

8. Bake, one batch a time, until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 6 to 10 minutes. Let cool for 3 to 5 minutes.

9. Meanwhile, in a small microwave-safe bowl, heat remaining ½ cup (113 grams) butter on high in 10-second intervals until melted.

10. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together remaining ⅔ cup (133 grams) sugar, remaining ¼ teaspoon ginger, and remaining ⅛ teaspoon cardamom.

11. Brush melted butter all over warm bread; immediately coat with sugar mixture. Serve warm, or let cool to room temperature on wire racks.

Note: *To use the windowpane test to check dough for proper gluten development, lightly flour hands and pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute, and test again.*

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CHOCOLATE COFFEE MAYO CAKE

Blue Plate® Mayonnaise gives this coffee-boosted chocolate cake a luxurious crumb unlike any other. A dreamy chocolate frosting doubles down on the decadence, making this the ultimate cocoa extravagance.

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

- 1⅓ cups hot, strong brewed coffee
- ¾ cup (64 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1⅔ cups (367 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (206 grams) Blue Plate Mayonnaise, room temperature
- 2½ cups (250 grams) sifted Swans Down® Cake Flour
- 1¼ teaspoons baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- Creamy Chocolate Frosting (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Grease and flour 2 (9-inch) round cake pans and line bottoms with parchment paper.
2. In a 2-cup glass measuring cup, whisk together coffee and cocoa until completely combined. Let stand until cooled, about 30 minutes.
3. In a large bowl, beat brown sugar and eggs with a mixer at high speed until light and fluffy, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add mayonnaise and beat until combined.
4. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, salt and baking powder. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to sugar mixture alternately with coffee mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Divide batter between prepared pans.
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 28 to 35 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Level cake layers, if desired; remove and discard parchment. Place a cake layer on a cake plate. Spread 1½ cups Creamy Chocolate Frosting on layer; top with remaining cake layer. Spread remaining frosting on top and sides of cake.

Creamy Chocolate Frosting

Makes about 5 cups

- 8 ounces (226 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- ¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, cubed
- 7½ cups (900 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 cup (240 grams) sour cream, room temperature
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

1. In the top of a double boiler, combine chocolate and butter. Cook over simmering water, stirring occasionally, until melted and smooth. Remove from heat; let cool for 5 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, beat confectioners' sugar, sour cream and vanilla with a mixer at low speed until smooth and well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Gradually beat in chocolate mixture until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Increase mixer speed to medium and beat until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Use immediately.

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TEST KITCHEN

All recipes in each issue pass through the hands of the *Bake from Scratch* test kitchen. Each is flavorful and distinctive and developed with your unique tastes in mind.

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IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS PRIME TIME FOR BAKING. The celebratory period seems ideal for icing cookies, frosting cakes, and rolling out dough. Maybe it's the holiday state of mind or maybe it's just the cold snap, but eitherway, I can't wait to preheat my oven.

Around this time last year, I was celebrating with an annual tradition: eggnog cocktails at Highlands Bar & Grill, one of my favorite restaurants in Birmingham, Alabama. There, I encountered one of their new pastry creations, a gâteau Basque pound cake. To my surprise, when I cut into it, no custard center oozed out. Instead, the cake had been made with the custard acting as its liquid base, meaning the batter baked into a solid, tender-crumbed cake that tasted of pure custard decadence. I was inspired by this brilliant idea to bring it to *The Bundt Collection*, a *Bake from Scratch* cookbook focused on the iconic Bundt cake. The Basque Bundt Cake is the beautiful amalgamation of two ideas into one delicious cake. I'm sharing it here now—consider it my gift to all my beloved bakers—because it's not something I can keep secret during this season of giving.

This issue further embraces this pumped-up baking spirit, highlighting the recipes we love to bake during the time we love to bake most. We tackle 1-2-3-4 cakes, giving them festive twists that welcome yuletide joy, including our scarlet and cream Vanilla-Red Velvet Layer Cake cover star (page 74). If you want to flex your decorating skills, learn to ice your cookies with expert finesse in The Essential . . . Royal Iced Cookies (page 35.) Or try out one of our Very Merry Tarts (page 76). The Poached Pear Buttermilk Tart is a fruity revamp on the buttermilk chess pie I enjoy every Christmas. We're also giving you plenty of recipes that use one of my ingredient obsessions—pearl sugar (page 47). If you always find yourself trapped in the kitchen Christmas Day—I've certainly been there—turn to 'Twas the Night before Christmas (page 87), our make-ahead guide to sweet and savory options for Christmas brunch. And in recognition of the current COVID-19 times we live and bake in, we have our Signed, Sealed, Delivered feature (page 97), dedicated to helping you make and package bars and cookies you can easily mail to loved ones you may be separated from this holiday season.

We're also featuring some bakers I know and love, from Carla Hall to Maria Provenzano. It's a great gathering of inspiration, bakers, and recipes to help you find any excuse to get busy with dough and batter.

Happy baking,

Brian

Brian Hart Hoffman
Editor-in-Chief

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BASQUE BUNDT CAKE

Makes 1 (10-cup) Bundt cake

The gâteau Basque, a classic French cake filled with luxurious pastry cream, is one of my favorites. When I saw a loaf cake take on the menu at one of my favorite restaurants, Highlands Bar & Grill in Birmingham, Alabama, I was thrilled. When I tasted the cake, I found that rather than having a pastry cream filling, it had the cream mixed right into the batter, and I was inspired to take the innovation one step further with a beautiful Bundt cake. We made a Basque Custard that we then stirred into a plain pound cake base, creating a cake that tastes of pastry cream but has the texture of a tender pound cake.

- **1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar**
- **5 large eggs (250 grams), room temperature**
- **3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) cream of tartar**
- **1⅔ cups (360 grams) Basque Custard (recipe follows)**
- **Confectioners' sugar, for dusting**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at low speed just until combined; increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at time, beating well after each addition.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and cream of tartar. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with Basque Custard, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
4. Spray a 10-cup Bundt pan with baking spray with flour. Spoon and spread batter evenly into prepared pan. Tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter a few times to settle batter and release any air bubbles.
5. Bake until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean, 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Invert cake onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature. Dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

PRO TIP

If your oven runs hot and browns your cakes easily, try baking your cake at 325°F (170°C) for the same bake time (1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes). It'll yield the same results but with a lighter crust.

Basque Custard

Makes about 2 cups

- **2 cups (480 grams) whole milk**
- **1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved**
- **⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar**
- **⅓ cup (40 grams) cornstarch**
- **4 large egg yolks (74 grams)**
- **1 large egg (50 grams)**
- **2 tablespoons (16 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**

1. Place a fine-mesh sieve over a medium bowl.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat milk and reserved vanilla bean seeds over medium heat until steaming. (Do not boil.)
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar, cornstarch, egg yolks, egg, flour, and salt. Gradually whisk hot milk mixture into sugar mixture. Return mixture to saucepan, and cook, whisking constantly, until bubbly and very thick, 2 to 6 minutes. Strain through prepared sieve. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of custard to prevent a skin from forming. Use warm.

ONE OF OUR FAVORITE *BAKE FROM SCRATCH* TRADITIONS IS AVAILABLE NOW!

Bakers, it's time to pull out the cookie cutters and piping tips—our 2020 *Holiday Cookies* special issue is here! This issue includes a merry and bright star-studded lineup of bakers, in addition to our own holiday favorite classics, like Peppermint Mocha Red Velvet Marble Cookies and Frangipane-Stuffed Ginger Cookies. More than 60 recipes and test kitchen tips and techniques will inspire you to preheat your oven and start baking.

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Master Decorated Cookies with Royal Icing
bake
FROM SCRATCH
59 Recipes for Festive Holiday Baking
Gingerbread Dutch Baby Pancake
Eggnog Rolls + More!
Christmas Quick Breads with Hallmark Home & Family's Maria Provenzano
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Photos courtesy of Laura Cortés

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Photography by Melissa Hom

CREAM CHEESE-STUFFED VANILLA-PEPPERMINT COOKIES

Packing a cream cheese surprise, these holiday cookies are flavored with Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract, a dynamic blend of both refreshing peppermint and creamy vanilla. We rounded out the festive flavor by rolling our cream cheese-stuffed cookie dough balls in crushed soft peppermint candies, creating a very merry cookie.

Makes about 14 cookies

- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **¾ cup (150 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature**
- **1½ teaspoons (6 grams) Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract**
- **1⅔ cups (208 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **½ cup (64 grams) crushed soft peppermint candies***
- **Garnish: crushed soft peppermint candies**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg and peppermint vanilla extract until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture all at once; beat at low speed just until combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.

3. In a small bowl, stir together cream cheese and remaining 2 tablespoons (24 grams) sugar until well combined. Cover cream cheese mixture and dough with plastic wrap; freeze for 25 minutes.

4. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. In a small shallow bowl, place candies.

6. Using a 1-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough into balls (about 18 grams each); flatten into 2-inch disks. Place 1½ teaspoons (about 9 grams) cream cheese mixture in center of 1 dough disk; cover with a second disk, and crimp edges to seal. Gently shape into a ball; roll in candies. (See Note.) Repeat with remaining dough and remaining cream cheese mixture. Place dough balls 1½ inches apart on prepared pans, and gently flatten to ¾-inch thickness, pressing together any cracks in edges, if necessary.

7. Bake, one batch a time, until edges are set and bottoms are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Carefully garnish warm cookies with candies, if desired. Let cool on pans for 3 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

**Do not substitute hard peppermint candies.*

Note: *If crushed soft peppermint candies aren't sticking well, lightly dampen hands with water as needed before rolling dough into balls and coating in candies.*

4 WAYS WITH
Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract

A bold holiday favorite, our Peppermint Vanilla Extract is a blend of invigorating mint oils and Heilala Pure Vanilla Extract to soothe the senses making a wonderful addition to chocolate bark, cookies, hot chocolate or cocktails.

Coffee creamer for the latte lover
In a saucepan over medium low heat, whisk together a 14 oz can of condensed milk and 1 ¾ cups of milk. Once warmed through, remove from the heat and stir in two teaspoons of Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract. Cool then cover and store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to five days.

Candy cane cocktails with a minty twist
Nothing makes you feel merry and bright quite like a peppermint-spiked cocktail. For a minty fresh kick add 4 teaspoons of Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract to a bottle of vodka and shake well. Perfect in your martini mix or white Russian cocktail.

Chocolate peppermint bark for the ultimate holiday gift
Melt an 11.5 oz bag of dark chocolate chips. Once completely melted remove from heat and add 2 teaspoons of Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract to the mixture. Spread evenly onto a prepared baking sheet with a spatula and sprinkle with crushed candy canes before chilling to harden. Break into pieces before serving or gifting.

A healthy herbal infusion
Add a teaspoon of Heilala Peppermint Vanilla Extract to your favorite herbal tea for the perfect evening brew to invigorate your senses. Enjoy as an after dinner delight to cleanse the palate. Serve warm with a drizzle of honey and squeeze of lemon.

Looking for pure peppermint inspiration? Find the recipe for this Cloudy Kitchen Ganache Hot Chocolate with Peppermint Marshmallows at www.heilalavanilla.com

Heilala

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MUST-HAVES FOR HOLIDAY BAKING AND BEYOND

LOOKING FOR A FEW TOOLS AND COOKBOOKS TO BOOST YOUR HOLIDAY BAKING SPIRIT? SPICE UP YOUR LIFE WITH THIS SEASON'S PICKS, FROM SASSY SPRINKLES TO SPACE-SAVING COOKIE CUTTERS, PLUS NEWLY RELEASED TOMES THAT TACKLE EVERYTHING FROM BROWNIES TO MILE-HIGH BAKING.

TRENDING TOMES

ATTACK OF THE SNACK CAKE!

Who says cake is only for dessert? Yossi Arefi's latest cookbook, *Snacking Cakes: Simple Treats for Anytime Cravings* (Clarkson Potter, 2020), indulges readers by transforming cake into an anytime treat. The no-fuss, one-bowl recipes in this collection are delightfully simple to throw together, made with ingredients bakers likely have in their pantries and baked in basic pans. This cookbook is perfect for bakers who crave near-instant baking satisfaction.

Available at *amazon.com* on October 27, 2020.

THE CREATIVE BAKER'S DREAM COOKBOOK

If Ruth Mar Tam wasn't inspiring you enough with her gorgeous Instagram feed, we now have her cookbook to drool over. The blogger behind *Cook Til Delicious* brings us *Baked to Order: 60 Sweet and Savory Recipes with Variations for Every Craving* (Page Street Publishing, 2020), a cookbook filled with delectable recipes and ways to modify them to fit your wants and needs. This tome is truly meant to satisfy every craving.

Available at *amazon.com* on November 17, 2020.

BETTER BAKING, BETTER BROWNIES

Our friend Mike Johnson (@mikebakesnyc) has released his debut cookbook, *Even Better Brownies: 50 Standout Bar Recipes for Every Occasion* (Page Street Publishing, 2020). OK, Mike, you have our attention. The cookbook walks readers through inspired recipes for decadent brownies and bars, complete with traditional iterations and inventive flavor combinations. From Cookie Butter Fudge to Chocolate Peanut Butter Pretzel Blondies, bakers will be able to whip up rich, tasty treats with a flick of the whisk.

Available at *amazon.com* on December 1, 2020.

TEST KITCHEN FINDS

HOLIDAY TIME = SPRINKLE TIME

Confectionery House Co. in Troy, New York, has its very own Santa's workshop, where whimsical sprinkles are blended by hand. Who could resist the Ugly Christmas Sweater Sprinkle Mix (which includes adorable mini gingerbread figures and cute candy canes) or the Two Sizes Too Small Sprinkle Mix—an ode to the grinch with heart at your holiday table.

Available at *etsy.com*, $6.99 for a 3-ounce bag

WARM SPICE AND EVERYTHING NICE

Our friends at Heilala Vanilla are likely enjoying the tropical winter warmth that the vanilla-growing region has to offer, but for the rest of us, we'll take all the heat we can get. To help us out, Heilala has created the perfect baking kit, the Spiced Vanilla Collection, to keep us extra cozy this season. The kit includes Pure Vanilla Paste and a Spiced Vanilla extract, which receives a boost from the aromatic flavors of cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. Use this spiced vanilla wherever you need a pop of warm holiday flavor.

Available at *heilalavanilla.com*, $44.97

CUT COOKIES, NOT CORNERS

This five-piece nesting cookie cutter set from The Cookie Cutter Shop is the perfect storage solution for one of our favorite cookie tools. Whip up jammy Linzers, conquer flawless royal iced cookies, and create stunning cookie trees with zero clutter. These will be the handiest purchase you make this holiday season.

Available at *thecookiecuttershop.com*, $8.95

BAKEWARE THAT'S CAST TO LAST

Seasoned for the season, Lodge Cast Iron is debuting a brand-new line of bakeware that is—as always—American-made, expertly crafted, and reliably durable. We have been obsessing over the jet-black Seasoned Cast Iron Baker's Skillet. At 10¼ inches wide, it has tall sides and a dual handle design, which means no more lifting heavy skillets in and out of the oven with just one long handle.

Available at *lodgecastiron.com*, $22.95

MAIL-ORDER HOLIDAY GOODNESS

Whether you are looking to send a box of delicious nostalgia to a loved one or just craving a magical morsel for yourself this season (you deserve it!), we have you covered. Check out some of our favorite landmark bakeries from around the US for decadent desserts delivered directly to your door.

BALTHAZAR BAKERY PANETTONE

Available at *goldbelly.com*, $79

COLLIN STREET BAKERY DELUXE FRUITCAKE

Available at *collinstreet.com*, $29.95

LLOYD'S FAMOUS CARROT CAKE

Available at *goldbelly.com*, $64

LECKERLEE LEBKUCHEN

Available at *leckerlee.com*, $28 for 5, $52 for 10, $100 for 20, $148 for 30

LEELEE'S RUGELACH BY A BROTHER

Available at *leeleesrugelach.com*, $18 for 12 pieces, $36 for 24 pieces

BAKER SPOTLIGHT: THE QUEEN BEE

LAURA CORTÉS IS THE ACCOMPLISHED HOME BAKER BEHIND CHUBBEE KITCHEN, A BLOG DEDICATED TO A VERY DELIBERATE BAKING CHALLENGE. LAURA BAKES THROUGH ONE COOKBOOK EVERY TWO MONTHS, ATTEMPTING TO BAKE AS MANY RECIPES AS POSSIBLE FROM EACH TOME. FROM OUR OWN BAKE FROM SCRATCH: VOLUME ONE TO JOANNE CHANG'S PASTRY LOVE, LAURA HAS BAKED THROUGH ONE SWEET LIBRARY. HERE, WE CHAT ALL THINGS HOME BAKING AND WHY COOKBOOKS ARE ONE OF HER FAVORITE WAYS TO LEARN.

How did you first get into baking and when did you decide that a blog was the next step on your baking journey?
LC: My mom had a cake-decorating business when I was a small child, so I remember her teaching me the basics, and I was certainly raised in a baking environment. Then, in 2014, I started working for a company that is very social, and I would bake things to bring into the office every day. It was so fun to have a captive audience, and I was definitely popular around the office for bringing in goodies! Over time, people encouraged me to start a side business, which is how the blog was born. I stuck with it for a while but realized I wasn't interested in the business side of baking—it became a chore to me. Baking should never be a chore! So, I just refocused my efforts back into baking for the moment and flexing my creative muscles.

We've all been spending more time at home recently. Have you challenged yourself with any difficult or more-involved bakes during the pandemic?
LC: I started my "One Book/Two Months" challenge in 2019. During the pandemic, I have been able to spend a lot more time in the kitchen, so I've been baking through my cookbooks more thoroughly. I've also made an effort to bake things that I wouldn't typically have tried. I just made a butter mochi cake for the first time, something I never would have bought in a bakery or restaurant. It's been so wonderful to be surprised by recipes.

How do you feel that cookbooks compare to recipes found online?
LC: When I crack open a new cookbook, I read it from cover to cover. There's so much valuable information found in forewords, prefaces, authors' letters, chapter openers, etc. A lot of people just go straight to the recipe, but I love to learn the background of the author and why they make certain decisions in the kitchen. To me, it's like going to school and taking a class, learning from one person for a whole semester.

What has been your favorite cookbook to bake from so far?
LC: *The Artful Baker* by Cenk Sönmezsoy is amazing. I have baked through close to nine cookbooks since I started "One Book/Two Months," and *The Artful Baker* is hands down my favorite. I love the style of instruction and the attention to detail. I like how Sönmezsoy is an unapologetic home baker, and he writes for home bakers. He doesn't assume you're going to have technical training and professional equipment. It's the perfect combination of approachable style and challenging recipes, my ideal cookbook.

Follow Laura:
chubbeekitchen.com / @chubbeekitchen

Red Velvet Cookies WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

'Tis the season for baking, and festive Red Velvet Cookies are a top choice to brighten up any holiday table. Soft and slightly chewy, they're rich with chocolatey, red velvet flavor and pretty enough to pack up in gift tins for family, friends and neighbors. ***MAKES ABOUT 24 COOKIES***

Cookies

¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1½ cups Swans Down® Cake Flour
3½ tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1½ tablespoons liquid red food coloring
1 teaspoon distilled white vinegar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Frosting

6 ounces cream cheese, softened
2 cups confectioners' sugar

PREHEAT oven to 375°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper

COOKIES: In a large bowl, beat butter and sugars with a mixer at medium-high speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg, beating well

WHISK together Swans Down Cake Flour, cocoa and baking soda in a separate bowl. With a mixer on medium speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined. Add food coloring, vinegar and vanilla, beating until combined

SHAPE cookie dough into balls (about 2 tablespoons each) and place at least 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Refrigerate for 10 minutes

BAKE until tops are set, about 8 minutes. Let cookies cool on pans for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely

FROSTING: In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with a mixer at high speed for 1 minute. Reduce mixer speed to medium and gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until smooth. Crumble 2 of the cooled cookies and set aside. Spread frosting over remaining cookies and sprinkle with cookie crumbles

AMERICA'S FAVORITE CAKE FLOUR SINCE 1894.

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Swans Down Cake Flour

RASPBERRY SWIRL CHEESECAKE BARS

Baking these festive raspberry-swirled bars in the revolutionary SHARP® SuperSteam™ Built-In Wall Oven makes the cheesecake texture especially velvety and smooth.

Makes 9 bars

- 1½ cups (212 grams) gingersnap cookie crumbs (about 30 cookies)
- 3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 9 ounces (255 grams) halved fresh raspberries (about 1⅔ cups lightly packed)
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon (8 grams) cornstarch
- 2 (8-ounce) packages (454 grams) cream cheese, room temperature and cubed
- 2 tablespoons (16 grams) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- ¾ cup (180 grams) sour cream, room temperature

1. Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend ¼ to ½ inch over sides of pan.

2. In a large bowl, stir together gingersnap crumbs and melted butter until well combined; using a small straight-sided measuring cup, press into bottom of prepared pan.

3. Position broiling pan on lower oven rack; place prepared pan on top. Set SHARP SuperSteam+ Built-In Wall Oven (SSC2489DS) to Manual/Convection Bake/Preheat/1 Tray/325°F/10 minutes/Start.

4. Bake for 10 minutes until set and fragrant. Remove from oven; using a straight-sided measuring cup, pack crust back down into an even layer, if necessary. Let cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes.

5. In the container of a blender, combine raspberries and ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar; purée until smooth. Strain raspberry mixture through an extra-fine-mesh sieve into a medium saucepan, discarding any seeds; whisk in cornstarch until well combined. Cook over medium heat until large bubbles form; cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 6 minutes. (Mixture should be the consistency of honey and will continue to thicken slightly as it cools). Transfer raspberry mixture to a small bowl; let cool for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

6. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add flour, vanilla, salt, and remaining ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar; beat at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until well combined, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Add sour cream; beat at medium-low speed until combined, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Pour mixture onto prepared crust, shaking pan gently to spread cream cheese mixture into an even layer. Tap sides of pan several times to release any air bubbles, popping any that rise to the surface with a wooden pick.

7. Working quickly, drop small dollops of cooled raspberry mixture on top of cream cheese mixture; using a wooden pick, swirl as desired. Place pan on broiling pan; set on lower oven rack.

8. Set SHARP SuperSteam+ Built-In Wall Oven (SSC2489DS) to Manual/Steam Bake/Water Bath/300°F/25 minutes/Start.

9. Bake for 25 minutes until edges are set, top has a dulled finish, and center is almost set. (It's OK if cheesecake is still quite jiggly; it will continue to set up as it cools.)

10. Using a knife, immediately loosen edges of cheesecake from parchment. Let cool in pan on a wire rack for 1½ to 2 hours. Refrigerate in pan on a wire rack overnight, loosely covering with foil only when completely cool to prevent condensation from forming on top of cheesecake. Using excess parchment as handles, carefully remove from pan, and transfer to a cutting board. Using a warm dry knife, cut into bars.

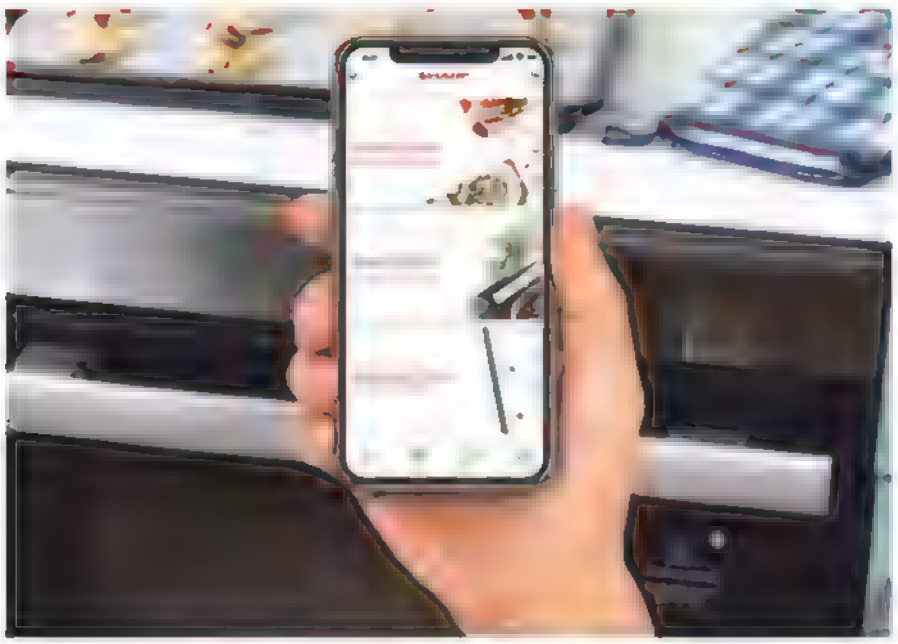
SHARP | Simply Better Living

SUPERSTEAM+™ BUILT-IN WALL OVEN

SSC2489DS

The Sharp® SuperSteam+ Built-In Wall Oven is the start of a cooking revolution. With Wi-Fi enabled IoT features, the innovations within this steam oven are a perfect match for modern cooking needs.

While regular steam only reaches 212°F, the SuperSteam+ oven can create superheated steam up to 485°F. Steam this hot can roast meats and caramelize sugars so your food can be brown and crispy on the outside, tender and juicy on the inside. With the Sharp SuperSteam+ Oven, you can grill without smoke, roast without drying, and get the roasty-toasty, tasty results you desire.



Get started right away with built-in rec pes and download the Sharp SuperSteam+ Oven app* to enable the smart features and access custom recipes powered by SideChef.

The new Sharp SuperSteam+ Built-In Wall Oven features Steam Bake for superior breaas, and Water Bath for cheesecakes, custards and puddings.

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EGGS

FROM THE OUTER WHITE TO RICH YOLK CENTER, WE DECONSTRUCT THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE EGG, THE FOUNDATION TO MANY A CLASSIC BAKED GOOD

What came first, the chicken or the egg? It's a question with no answer, the perfect example of a logic paradox. An easier question: what came first, the baker or the egg? For most of us, we became a baker once we laid our hands on an egg. No other baking ingredient holds so much potential, purpose, and possibility. One swift crack against the counter, and you've opened a door to untold adventure—or folly, if you're not careful. We're diving deep into this humble yet temperamental ingredient, from the protein-packed egg white to the rich golden yolk, to ensure that any time you reach for an egg, you understand its power and pitfalls.

BY KYLE GRACE MILLS

BUYING EGGS

First things first: size. Most recipes—and every recipe developed and tested for *Bake from Scratch*—call for large eggs. Sans eggshell, the various sizes and their approximate weights are medium egg (47 grams), large egg (50 grams), extra-large egg (56 grams), and jumbo egg (60 grams). Thirteen grams separate the smallest and largest sizes—a seemingly inconsequential number. However, if you're making one of our 1-2-3-4 cakes (see page 65), which call for four eggs, that discrepancy is quadrupled. What was only 13 grams' difference is now 52 grams—the equivalent of an extra egg added to the batter. If you've purchased anything other than large eggs, weigh them before adding them in so you can correct the amount as needed.

As for the other egg distinctions, the color of the eggshell is determined by the chicken's genes, and the egg's taste is decided by how the chicken it came from lives and what it eats. So, don't judge an egg by its shell but definitely consider labels like "free-range" or "pasture-raised." Free-range and pasture-raised chickens not only live better, but they also eat better, producing delicious eggs with brilliantly golden or orange yolks. That isn't to say that factory-raised chicken eggs don't have benefits—they're less expensive and much easier to find. Which you choose can depend on your recipe. If you're making something that depends on the rich egg yolk, like challah or custard, springing for free-range eggs will help improve the overall taste and color of your baked good. If the recipe requires very little egg and is dominated by other, stronger flavors, the type of egg you use will make a minimal impact on flavor, texture, or color. Store your eggs in the refrigerator, preferably on a stationary shelf (eggs stored in the door will have thinner egg whites from all the jostling). How to determine egg freshness? Place your egg in a bowl or cup of water. If the egg sinks, it's fresh. If it floats, it's a bad egg.

THE WHOLE EGG

Working as a binder, emulsifier, leavening agent, tenderizer, and flavor booster all at once, the egg is a type A multitasker. In bread doughs, like for our Eggnog Sweet Rolls (page 95), it helps supply tender, tasty fat, qualifying the dough as "enriched." When adding eggs to bread dough, it's best to have them at room temperature, as cold eggs will affect the dough's internal temperature, stunting proofing. In cakes, bars, and cookies, like our Chocolate-Peanut Butter-Pistachio Biscotti (page105), the egg binds together numerous ingredients into cohesive batters or doughs, gelling butter, sugar, and flour in the oven into a structured, stable whole. In cakes and certain pastries, like pâte à choux, the egg helps leaven the baked good through steam released from the egg white.

Then there's the crafty baker's secret weapon: egg wash. Egg wash is typically one egg (or just an egg white or egg yolk) lightly beaten with 1 to 2 tablespoons water or milk to create a thin mixture that can be brushed onto dough before baking. For pie-making in particular, egg wash shows its amazing versatility at solving a number of problems. Brush your parbaked piecrust with an egg wash and then bake it until the egg wash has become dry and shiny, an extra 2 to 3 minutes, creating a protective seal between your tender piecrust and creamy filling—no more soggy bottoms! Egg wash can also work as a baker's glue, sealing a double crust together. A final brush of egg wash onto the unbaked upper crust bestows beautiful golden color and shine. We use egg wash in similar ways throughout this issue, from securing pearl sugar to the tops of our Swedish Cinnamon Buns (page 53) to imparting gorgeous color and shine to our Pull-Apart Milk Bread Wreath (page 94).

EGG WHITE

The egg white is about 90% water. The remaining 10% is made up mostly of proteins, which, when vigorously whipped with a whisk, become agitated, unfolding and bonding to each other to create a microscopic mesh network that separates air bubbles and water. This egg white foam is the secret to all meringues, mousses, soufflés, and chiffon cakes. What's important to know about whipping egg whites is how to keep from overwhipping. Overwhip your egg whites and the sulfur-bonded proteins will begin to stick together *too* well. They begin to clump, and your whipped mixture will begin to collapse, because the air is no longer suspended by the protective protein net. French bakers of old used copper mixing bowls and whisks to combat gritty, collapsed whipped egg whites. Copper distracts sulfur-bonded proteins from clustering together, keeping your whipped egg whites from collapsing into gritty bits. The modern baker has a cheaper way to combat sulfur bonds: acid, in the form of citrus juice or cream of tartar. As little as ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar or lemon juice can slow down the sulfur bonds enough to create a stable mixture. The Italian Meringue used on our Hot Chocolate Marshmallow Cake (page 68) contains cream of tartar for this reason.

The only other nemesis to whipped egg whites? Fat. Whether it's oil from your hands, an errant smear of butter in your mixing bowl, or even a drop of egg yolk, fat slows down and stunts the foaming process. These small traces of fat won't ruin your foam, but you'll work longer and harder and the result won't be nearly as fluffy or stable. Before whipping egg whites, make sure your mixing bowls and utensils are scrupulously clean and try to refrain from touching the whites with your hands when you separate the eggs. As for aging egg whites—the theory that claims egg whites that have "aged" at room temperature for a few hours or overnight whip better than fresh, cold egg whites—it's not as useful in the modern world of electric mixers. The cold egg whites heat up fairly well during the electric mixing process and are less alkaline than aged egg whites, making for a more stable meringue. So, aging your egg whites won't make or break your meringue if you're using an electric mixer.

Besides being used for their whip-able quality, egg whites are an essential ingredient in royal icing. The egg white proteins help your royal icing transform into a hard, smooth surface while it dries. For those wary of using raw egg whites in a recipe, though, try meringue powder. This dried, powdered version of egg whites mixed with sugar and gum is, by nature, pasteurized (with any harmful bacteria killed during the heating and drying process). For The Essential . . . Royal Iced Cookies (page 35), we used a meringue powder-based royal icing that is food-safe and functional.

EGG YOLK

The rich heart of the egg, the yolk contains all of the fat and cholesterol of the egg and at least half of the protein. While they're rich and flavorful, yolks are mostly prized for their emulsifying and thickening qualities. When heated with dairy and sugar, the egg proteins spread evenly throughout and congeal to create a smooth, creamy mixture. Basically, without eggs, custard is simply hot sugar milk. Custards can call for whole eggs or just egg yolks, but the yolk is always essential. Custards made with whole eggs will be stiffer and glossier, like the firm custard base for our Orange-Anise Basque Cheesecake (page 61). Custard using only egg yolks, like the Peppermint Pastry Cream in our Peppermint Custard-Stuffed Chocolate Cookies (page 61), will be more tender and creamier.

The same thing that makes custard work—heat—can also be its undoing. Egg yolk that is incorporated into a hot mixture too quickly will curdle. For our pastry cream, we temper our eggs before cooking them on the stovetop. The method calls for scalding your dairy—heating it on the stovetop until steaming—before adding it in a steady stream to your eggs yolks and sugar

while whisking constantly. This keeps the eggs from being shocked into premature coagulation on the hot stovetop. Another form of insurance against curdling? Cornstarch or flour. Bringing solid starch granules to the party, these starches absorb water and swell up, slowing down the coagulation of the egg proteins and keeping the custard stable even during boiling. Custards thickened with cornstarch or flour will be much thicker than a pure egg custard, and you must boil out the residual starchy flavor, 2 to 3 minutes.

Afterward, you can remove any curdled bits by pressing your custard through a fine-mesh sieve before refrigerating. We always suggest you cover custard with plastic wrap before refrigerating. Why? Because, otherwise, the exposed custard surface will form a leathery skin due to evaporation toughening the proteins and starch. Once formed, it will be impossible to mix back into smoothness, with stubborn pieces of surface remaining whole.

BAKE WITH EGGS

In this issue, don't miss:

Gingerbread Custard Bars, page **62**
Pear and Cranberry Kuchen, page **63**
Poached Pear Buttermilk Tart, page **82**

EGGNOG NANAIMO BARS

A *BAKE FROM SCRATCH* EDITOR EXPLORES HER CANADIAN ROOTS THE BEST WAY SHE KNOWS HOW—THROUGH BAKING AND BOOZE

FOOD STYLING BY
MEGAN LANKFORD
STYLING BY
DOROTHY WALTON

What I miss most about my maternal grandmother, Megan Shackleton (née Lloyd-Jones), is her bubbly, full-throated laugh. When that magnetic sound was directed at you, it made you feel like the most winsome and interesting person in the room. Before she passed away, my grandma suffered a cruel battle with Alzheimer's, descending into a painful fog of confusion. Many things about her changed and were lost, but some gems came to the surface: precious memories of her childhood in Saskatchewan, Canada, of her beloved brother, Bud, and their pet German shepherd, Princey. Grandma was a very proud Canadian, matched only by her pride in being a member of the Lloyd-Jones clan. Though I knew what her Canadian and family heritage meant to her, there was much I couldn't understand or connect to—and when she was gone, it felt like the chasm between my world and hers got infinitely harder to breach.

Two years ago, I finally made a pilgrimage to Calgary, Canada, to meet with my great-aunt Kathleen and my second cousins Brenda and Megan, the wife and children of my late great-uncle Bud. My family and I were greeted with many wonderful things—memories and photographs, hugs and barbecue—but one of the greatest treasures lay tucked away in the refrigerator. Cut into criminally small squares was my aunt Kathleen's Nanaimo bars. A classic Canadian dessert, Nanaimo bars pack a custard powder-based cream filling, velvet ganache topping, and a crust that sports the trifecta of nuts, coconut, and chocolate. Before we left, I was gifted a collection of Aunt Kathleen's handwritten recipes, including the one for her Nanaimo bars. Perhaps because I am a baker and a romantic, this family recipe felt like I was one step closer to something I had been afraid I'd lost.

As the *Bake from Scratch* team worked to reinvent this family recipe, I tried to find a way to bring all the strings of my Canadian roots together. I don't know if my grandmother would have snacked on Nanaimo bars in her day—she was a woman who famously spent her calories on cocktails, not dessert—but I like to think the eggnog- and bourbon-infused version would tempt her and that my meandering story would elicit one of those warm, full-throated laughs.

—Kyle Grace Mills, Managing Editor

THE REDO

EGGNOG NANAIMO BARS

Makes 24 bars

The classic Canadian dessert gets a bold, boozy revamp thanks to a touch of eggnog and bourbon. The nutmeg in the eggnog helps cut through the custard and chocolate richness with aromatic spice, while crunchy walnuts and coconut impart extra chewiness.

- ⅔ cup (150 grams) unsalted butter
- ½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons (91 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
- 1 large egg (50 grams)
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams)
- 2⅓ cups (295 grams) shortbread cookie crumbs*
- 1¼ cups (105 grams) sweetened flaked coconut
- ½ cup (57 grams) finely chopped toasted walnuts
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- Eggnog Custard Filling (recipe follows)
- 6 ounces (170 grams) 64% cacao semisweet chocolate baking bars, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons (28 grams) vegetable oil

1. Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the top of a double boiler, combine butter, cocoa, sugar, and salt. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until butter is melted. Whisk in egg and egg yolk until well combined; cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F (71°C), about 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in cookie crumbs, coconut, walnuts, and vanilla. Press mixture into bottom of prepared pan; let cool in pan on a wire rack for 30 minutes.
3. Using a small offset spatula, spread Eggnog Custard Filling onto prepared crust in a smooth, even layer. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. In the clean top of a double boiler, combine chocolate and oil. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Working quickly, pour chocolate mixture over chilled filling. Using a small offset spatula and tilting pan as needed, spread chocolate mixture into an even layer; tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter several times to smooth chocolate mixture and release any air bubbles. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to overnight.
5. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan; using a warm, dry, serrated knife, cut into bars. Serve at room temperature.

**We used Walkers Pure Butter Shortbread Cookies.*

Eggnog Custard Filling

Makes about 2 cups

- ¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 2½ tablespoons (24 grams) custard powder*
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) bourbon
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground nutmeg
- 3 cups (360 grams) confectioners' sugar
- 3½ tablespoons (52.5 grams) prepared eggnog

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and custard powder at medium-low speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in bourbon, vanilla, and nutmeg. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar alternately with eggnog, beating until well combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat for 1 minute. Use immediately.

**We used Bird's Custard Powder, available at select grocery stores and* amazon.com.

LIFE FROM SCRATCH

MARIA PROVENZANO OF *FROM SCRATCH WITH MARIA* IS A WOMAN AFTER *BAKE FROM SCRATCH*'S HEART, TEACHING LEGIONS OF CREATIVES HOW TO MAKE—AND BAKE—THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BREE MCCOOL / @breemccoolphoto

For many, "hands-on" is just an expression. For Maria Provenzano, it's a way of life. Maria is the ever-capable mind behind *From Scratch with Maria*, a blog devoted to crafting, and one of the resident DIY experts on The Hallmark Channel's *Home & Family*. Whether you've ever desired to make a chocolate cake that resembles a roaring bonfire or your own snowflake table setting, Maria has been showing you how to do it all since 2013. But this devotion to the art of creativity began way before the online realm of Pinterest, Instagram, or blogs took off.

In fact, Maria's claim to the DIY throne is a veritable birthright. Hailing from the Great Lakes region of Michigan, Maria learned early that your best tools are your own two hands and a bit of ingenuity. "I grew up not knowing people bought jelly from the grocery store—that was something you made," she says. Her paternal grandfather, Frank, ran Provenzano's, an Italian specialty food store in Saginaw, Michigan, with his parents and brothers for more than 50 years. The store was a culinary lynchpin of the community, serving up from-scratch delicacies you could only find in Saginaw. Of particular fame were the jars of

the family's pasta sauce and their fresh, homemade doughnuts. Maria's mother, an accomplished baker with German and Irish roots, took Maria's education the rest of the way. "Whether it was knitting our Christmas stockings, sewing our Halloween costumes, or teaching me how to bake a cake, my mom did it all. She always had me up on the counter baking with her," she says.

For Maria, turning this passion for self-made magic into a career came when she began her own family. Pregnant with her first child in 2013, she kept coming back to one question: "I asked myself, 'What would you love to do even if you never got paid?'" Her blog, *From Scratch with Maria*, was the unequivocal answer. The site coincided with the popularization of Pinterest and Instagram, two platforms celebrating everyday inspiration on a new scale. From there, it snowballed into her next big break: *Home & Family*.

A fan of the Hallmark Channel's signature lifestyle show, Maria was ecstatic when a friend told her she would be on the show. "I assumed she was talking about me being in the audience—when in fact I got signed up for a segment," Maria says. A running guest spot eventually turned into a full-time feature, as Maria became "a family member" and one of the show's DIY experts. It's the ideal platform for Maria to show viewers how to make anything from a mistletoe centerpiece to hand-painted tea towels. "No show accomplishes what we do in two hours, five days a week. It's the full lifestyle package. Across the board, when you think of Hallmark as a brand, the goal is to connect people and bring joy into life. *Home & Family* has those very same values. People come to the show to be happy, and they leave happy."

At front and center of Maria's expertise is her perfected blend of DIY craftmanship and baking prowess. "Baking is the perfect blank canvas. Just look at the egg, and how many things you can make with an egg both in terms of decoration and flavor. I take this blank canvas and transform it with my DIY innovation. This turns into something like candy corn meringues or Sand Castle Cake." Maria has a way of translating these complicated ideas into the most approachable tutorials, inviting everyone to reap the rewards of a creative endeavor.

As for bringing the next generation into the baking fold, Maria knows it starts with the adults, not the kids. "My mom taught me that the kitchen was a sacred place. We'd spend hours in there just making Christmas cookies, which was such an important bonding experience. Purely selfishly, I wanted the same thing for my kids. You get to help your kids unlock and nurture their creativity and bake. What can be better than that?" she says with a laugh. Her main secret to making the adventure in the kitchen fun? Make a mess. Maria's recent IGTV series, called Making Messes Monday, is all about bringing her kids, Grant and JJ, into the kitchen to teach them how to make everything from lemonade to buttercream-frosted sugar cookies. There's flour on Maria's jacket, frosting on her son's chin, and crumbs aplenty—but everyone is having the time of their lives. "My mom and I used to put flour on our faces, joking that if we had that, people would think we were working really hard. In reality, no one remembers if your kitchen was a mess. They just remember the experience and whether the cookies tasted good," Maria shares. The end goal completely eclipses the cleanup.

All of Maria's work looks to bring the empowering creativity humans have as children back into adulthood. "You can remember the pride you felt as a kid when you made something and how excited you were to show someone what you created. When we grow up, we get disconnected from that self-expression. There's something so satisfying about lighting up with that feeling again as an adult," she muses. Even with Maria's step-by-step tutorials and in-depth recipes, anything a maker creates using her teachings will be something singularly unique. "That's what's so incredible about the 'from scratch' philosophy. Nobody else in the world has what you just made—it's an original," Maria says.

Come Christmas morning, Maria will be in her kitchen with Grant and JJ, making fresh doughnuts—a tradition she introduced to her own family, the way her mom introduced her to Christmas cookie-baking all those years before. These customs will be more than cherished memories—they'll become her boys' legacies. "I had a friend once tell me that my sons' future spouses will feel like they could never live up to my cooking and baking. I laughed and said, 'They don't have to worry about a thing. My sons will be cooking for them.'"

Cucidati Quick Bread
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CUCIDATI QUICK BREAD

Makes 2 (8½x4½-inch) loaves

The classic Italian fig-and-walnut Christmas cookies called cucidati *are a staple in many Italian American families, and each family has their own way of making them special. Traditionally, the classic flavors of dried fruit, nuts, and oranges are rolled inside of a buttery, soft cookie dough and then dipped in a simple frosting and topped with nonpareils after they are baked. This recipe has all of the flavors you are looking for in the cucidati cookies but in the form of a loaf.*

- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
- 2 teaspoons (2 grams) orange zest
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- ¾ cup (168 grams) olive oil
- ¾ cup (180 grams) whole milk, room temperature
- ¼ cup (60 grams) sour cream, room temperature
- ¼ cup (60 grams) fresh orange juice
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- ¾ cup (96 grams) dried figs, stemmed and chopped
- ¾ cup (96 grams) raisins
- ¼ cup (36 grams) toasted pine nuts
- 2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar
- 2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 grams) heavy whipping cream

Garnish: nonpareils

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 2 (8½x4½-inch) loaf pans with cooking spray.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, orange zest, cinnamon, and salt.

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat granulated sugar and eggs at low speed until light and fluffy and pale in color, 2 to 3 minutes.

4. In a medium bowl, whisk together oil, milk, sour cream, orange juice, and vanilla. With mixer on medium-low speed, add oil mixture to sugar mixture, beating until smooth and combined. Reduce mixer speed to low, and gradually add flour mixture, beating just until combined. (Do not overmix.) Fold in figs, raisins, and pine nuts. Divide batter between prepared pans.

5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 15 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on a wire rack.

6. In another medium bowl, whisk together confectioners' sugar and 2 tablespoons (30 grams) cream until smooth; add up to remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) cream, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until desired consistency is reached. (See Note.) Drizzle glaze onto cooled loaves. Garnish with nonpareils, if desired.

Note: *If the glaze becomes too runny, whisk in a little more confectioners' sugar. You want it to pour easily, but it should be thick enough to stick to the loaves.*

GINGERBREAD LOAF WITH DARK CHOCOLATE AND SPICED CRUMBLE

Makes 2 (8½x4½-inch) loaves

I can't help but love the classic, comforting, spicy, and sweet gingerbread flavor and smell. You don't just have to stop at cookies, though! This Gingerbread Loaf with Dark Chocolate and Spiced Crumble is a must this holiday season. I took all the flavors in a gingerbread cookie and not only turned it into a quick bread but made it over-the-top with the addition of dark chocolate and topped it with a spiced crumble for some added texture.

Batter:

- 2 cups (250 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) pumpkin pie spice*
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- ¾ cup (180 grams) sour cream, room temperature
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- 2 tablespoons (42 grams) unsulphured molasses
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1½ cups (255 grams) chopped 63% cacao dark chocolate*

Topping:

- ¾ cup (94 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (47 grams) old-fashioned oats
- ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Generously spray 2 (8½x4½-inch) loaf pans with cooking spray.

2. For batter: In a large bowl, whisk together flour, brown sugar, baking powder, pie spice, baking soda, and salt.

3. In a medium bowl, stir together sour cream, eggs, molasses, and vanilla. Add sour cream mixture and melted butter to flour mixture, stirring just until combined. Fold in chocolate. Divide batter between prepared pans.

4. For topping: In another medium bowl, combine flour, oats, sugars, and pie spice. Using a fork, stir in melted butter in a slow, steady stream. Crumble topping evenly over each loaf.

5. Bake until center is set and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on a wire rack.

**Cinnamon can be substituted for pumpkin pie spice, and chocolate chips can be used in place of chopped chocolate.*

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Gingerbread Loaf with
Dark Chocolate and
Spiced Crumble

the essential...

ROYAL ICED COOKIES

LEARN HOW TO MAKE DELICIOUSLY DECORATED COOKIES WITH OUR IN-DEPTH GUIDE TO ROYAL ICING, THE EDIBLE ADORNMENT TO RULE THEM ALL

By Kyle Grace Mills
RECIPE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD STYLING BY LAURA CRANDALL
STYLING BY MARY BETH JONES

In 1840, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert celebrated their nuptials with an exquisitely ornate wedding cake that weighed 300 pounds and was 10 feet in circumference. Adorned with Greco-Roman motifs of laurels and bouquets and crowned with sculptures of the couple and Britannia, the female embodiment of Britain, its majestic decoration hid a rather humble English plum fruit cake. To the shock of wedding guests and the public, what looked like intricately carved marble was in fact edible artifice: royal icing, piped and molded into unprecedented glory.

The simple combination of sugar, water, and egg white, royal icing has been the pastry chef's artistic medium since the 1600s. Traditionally used to gild cakes, this malleable icing offered both creative license for decoration and a protective coating to seal in the cake's tender texture. In years since, the icing has lent itself to the greatest of holiday traditions: Christmas cookies. We're taking on this classic art, diving deep into three royal icing decorations: piped, marbled, and brushed. From proper consistency to steady piping, we'll show you how to make brilliantly tinted and stunningly designed ornaments, snowflakes, and winter trees. With our thoroughly modern guide to a historic technique, you'll be able to transform a plain cookie into a festive masterpiece.

A Tale of Two Consistencies

Learn to navigate the two forms of royal icing, border and flood, with a little help from water and confectioners' sugar

BORDER ICING

USES: Think of border icing as the stiff upper lip of royal icing. It provides two key functions for decorating your cookies. First, it acts as rigid border and dam for the looser flood icing used to fill the majority of the cookie. Second, it offers 3D decoration, creating raised dots, lines, and patterns across your cookie without sinking and losing its shape.

CONSISTENCY: When a spoon or spatula is lifted out of the icing, it should keep a soft peak. Too thick, and it will require too much pressure to pipe and won't come out of the piping tip smoothly. For this problem, add more water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until desired consistency is reached. If it's too thin, your borders and decoration won't keep their shape when piped. Add confectioners' sugar, 1 teaspoon (2 grams) at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Keep in mind that you may have to adjust consistency after adding your gel food coloring.

FLOOD ICING

USES: Flood icing is the shapeshifter of royal icing, filling the nooks and crannies of your detailed cookie with ease. Its loose structure helps fill a cookie faster and more smoothly than border icing can. While it is most commonly used to create a matte canvas, it can also be used to make an elaborate marbling design, like for our Ornament Cookies.

CONSISTENCY: Flood icing consistency should resemble the velvet texture of runny honey, with icing that falls from the spoon in smooth ribbons that sit and then slowly settle back into uniformity. It is also occasionally called 10-second icing because if you run your whisk through the icing, it should settle back down after 10 seconds. If your icing is too thick, it won't fill the cookie properly and will have a lot of air bubbles. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Too thin, and your icing will flow over the border icing and right over the edge of the cookie. Add confectioners' sugar, 1 teaspoon (2 grams) at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Keep in mind that you may have to adjust consistency after adding your gel food coloring.

Make Your Cookie Canvas

Before we begin piping ornate decorations on top of our cookies, we need to create a smooth royal icing base, a mixture of firm border icing and runny flood icing

THE BORDER: Place your border icing in a pastry bag fitted with a Wilton No. 1 piping tip. Pick a starting point. Touch tip to cookie surface and then start applying pressure. Once icing begins to come out, lift the tip off the cookie and continue to apply even pressure. An icing string should form between the cookie surface and your piping tip. Keep applying even pressure, and let the icing fall into place, guiding it with your hand. Your tip should not touch the cookie, only the icing thread. When you reach the end, stop applying pressure, and touch back down to break the thread. Don't rush the process, or it will break or start to curl. Keep piping tips clean and covered with a damp paper towel when not being used.

THE FLOOD: Place your flood icing in a squeeze bottle with a small opening or ina pastry bag fitted with a Wilton No. 3 piping tip. Squeeze out a puddle of icing, allowing it to pool from the center out. Don't squeeze out too much at once, or you'll overwhelm the border. Use a wooden pick to gently shift the icing to fill in the gaps. Then use your pick to spread the icing in other directions. Once filled, you can pop any air bubbles with the pick to create a smooth surface. Let dry for 2 to 3 hours. Keep in mind that humidity affects the drying time, so if it's a wet day, place your cookies near a fan to help speed up the process.

Shop Talk: Essential Equipment

From cookie cutters to piping tips, here's a list of some of the tools we used to make our deliciously dynamic cookies

1. Pastry Bags: As you'll be piping a number of colored icings with specific piping tips, having a good number of pastry bags on hand is a must.

2. Piping Tips: For our recipes, we used Wilton No. 1, Wilton No. 2, and Wilton No. 3 piping tips, available at specialty decorating stores like Michaels or online at *amazon.com*.

3. Pearl Sprinkles: The final touch on our Snowflake Cookies, white pearl sprinkles can be purchased at specialty stores like Michaels or online at *amazon.com*.

4. Paintbrushes: A food-safe paintbrush will help you create the snowy detail on our Winter Tree Cookies. We used one from a Wilton Cake Decorating Tools, 5-Piece Brush Set, available at Michaels and online.

5. Squeeze Bottles: For easy flooding of our cookies, we use Wilton Squeeze Bottles, found at Michaels and online.

6. Cookie Cutters: We used a 3⅛-inch snowflake cookie cutter and a 3½-inch Christmas tree cookie cutter, both available at *annclarkcookiecutters.com*. Our 3½-inch ornament cookie cutter can be found at *kitchenconservatory.com*.

7. Wooden Picks: We use wooden picks, which are longer than your average toothpick (about 4 inches long), to help guide flood icing and pop unwanted air bubbles. They're also excellent for swirling and marbling your icing on the fly.

8. Gel Food Coloring: We like to use gel food coloring, in particular Wilton gel food coloring, to tint royal icing because the gel doesn't affect the consistency or bleed like liquid food coloring would.

CHRISTMAS SUGAR COOKIES

Makes about 36 cookies

Our base cookie dough yields tender, buttery sugar cookies prime for our Royal Icing decoration. The best part about these cookies? No chilling or freezing required! Whether you're making ornaments, trees, or snowflakes, simply roll out your dough, cut into desired shapes, and bake.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**
- **3¼ cups (406 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **Royal Icing (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and confectioners' sugar, slowly increasing mixer speed to medium, until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and vanilla, beating until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until a dough forms. Scrape sides of bowl, and knead dough 3 to 4 times in bowl to make sure everything is well combined.
4. Divide dough in half; cover one half with plastic wrap. On a heavily floured surface, roll remaining half to ¼-inch thickness. (Lightly flour top of dough if it sticks to rolling pin.) Using desired holiday cutters, cut dough, rerolling scraps as necessary. Using a small offset spatula, place cookies at least 1 inch apart on prepared pans.
5. Bake, one batch at a time, until lightly browned, 7 to 8 minutes. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes. Using a large offset or flat metal spatula, remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. Decorate cooled cookies as desired with Royal Icing.

PRO TIP

It's the nature of this icing to harden and dry out—so if you get busy with other projects in the kitchen, be sure to cover the top of your Royal Icing with a damp paper towel to keep it fluid and fresh, for up to 1 hour. For longer periods of time, store in an airtight container.

Royal Icing

Makes about 6 cups

Confectioners' sugar, meringue powder, water, and extract are the only ingredients needed to make royal icing, a baker's number one tool for making edible art. We used meringue powder—a blend of dried, pasteurized egg whites, sugar, cornstarch, and citric acid—rather than the traditional raw egg whites, for food safety and ease. Whipped into a stiff mixture, this icing will appear dense and thick, not light and fluffy like your typical meringue—that's good! The meringue powder isn't needed for creating volume. Instead, it's the secret ingredient to creating a structured, pipable icing that will harden into a resilient edible adornment.

- **1 (2-pound) package (907 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **5 tablespoons (50 grams) meringue powder**
- **¾ cup (180 grams) warm water (105°F/41°C to 110°F/43°C)**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) almond extract**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat confectioners' sugar and meringue powder at low speed until combined. Slowly add ¾ cup (180 grams) warm water and almond extract, beating until fluid, about 1 minute. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until stiff, 4 to 5 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

ORNAMENT COOKIES

Like the vintage ornaments you were never allowed to touch as a kid, these marvelously marbled cookies are extraordinarily ornate and brilliantly colored.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
Royal Icing (recipe on page 40)
Water, as needed
Wilton Gel Food Coloring in Kelly Green, Juniper Green, Christmas Red, Golden Yellow, and Black
3 to 6 pastry bags
3 piping bottles (optional)
3 Wilton No. 1 piping tips
3 Wilton No. 3 piping tips
36 (3½-inch) ornament-shaped Christmas Sugar Cookies (recipe on page 40)
Wooden picks

1. Divide Royal Icing among 3 bowls: 3 cups (540 grams) in the first, 1½ cups (270 grams) in the second, and 1½ cups (270 grams) in the third. Cover bowls with a damp paper towel or kitchen towel to keep icing from drying out.
2. To the first bowl (3 cups [540 grams]), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place 1 cup (180 grams) in a pastry bag fitted with a very small round piping tip (Wilton No. 1). To the remaining 2 cups (360 grams), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until flood consistency is reached. Place in a pastry bag or a small piping bottle (if using) fitted with small round piping tip (Wilton No. 3).
3. To the second bowl (1½ cups [270 grams]), slowly add Kelly green food coloring until a bright green is reached; slowly add juniper green until the desired color is reached. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place ½ cup (90 grams) in a separate bowl, cover airtight, and set aside. To the remaining 1 cup (180 grams), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until flood consistency is reached. Place in a pastry bag or a small piping bottle (if using) with small round piping tip (Wilton No. 3).
4. To the third bowl (1½ cups [270 grams]), add Christmas red food coloring until desired color is reached; add golden yellow and a touch of black to keep it from going pink. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place ½ cup (90 grams) in a separate bowl, cover airtight, and set aside. To the remaining 1 cup (180 grams), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until flood consistency is reached. Place in a pastry bag or a small piping bottle fitted with small round piping tip (Wilton No. 3).
5. Using white border icing, pipe an outline along edges of a cookie. Using the white flood icing, fill in the top quarter of the round part of the ornament cookie; pipe a line each of red flood icing, green flood icing, white flood icing, green flood icing, and red flood icing. Fill in the remaining area with white flood icing. Using a wooden pick, remove any air bubbles and make sure there are no gaps in the icing. Using a clean wooden pick, drag down through the centr of the colored band of icing, wipe pick clean, and repeat 2 more times, to the left and right of the center, spacing evenly and wiping pick clean after each drag. Then drag up 2 times, between the down drags, wiping pick clean after each drag. Repeat with remaining cookies. Let dry for 2 to 3 hours.
6. Uncover the red and green border icings, and place each in a pastry bag fitted with a very small round piping tip (Wilton No. 1). Above the marble design, pipe a red line and then a green line. Below design, pipe a green line and then a red line. Pipe 2 more red lines, between each level down the point of the ornament shape on the lower part of the cookie. Pipe a horizontal row of green dots between bottom red lines (4 dots and then 3 dots); pipe a vertical row of 2 green dots on the bottom tip of the ornament. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Decoration Details: Ornament Cookies

1. Using the white flood icing, fill in the top quarter of the round part of the ornament cookie; pipe a line each of red flood icing, green flood icing, white flood icing, green flood icing, and red flood icing. Keep a steady hand as you pipe your alternating flood icings, as any wiggling will lead to uneven icing bleed. Try to keep the lines an even thickness as well, as one heavier line can overwhelm a thinner line. You don't need to touch the border icing as you pipe; if it doesn't naturally settle into the edges, you can use a wooden pick to gently nudge it to the edge.

2. Using a clean wooden pick, drag a line down through the center of the colored band of icing. Wipe pick clean, and repeat 2 more times, to the left and right of the center, spacing evenly and wiping pick clean after each drag (any residual icing left on the pick will muddy the colors). Then drag up 2 times, between the down drags, wiping pick clean after each drag. Let dry for 2 to 3 hours.

3. Above the marble design, pipe a red line and then a green line. Below design, pipe a green line and then a red line. Pipe 2 more red lines, between each level down the point of the ornament shape on the lower part of the cookie. Pipe a horizontal row of green dots between bottom red lines (4 dots and then 3 dots); pipe a vertical row of 2 green dots on the bottom tip of the ornament. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

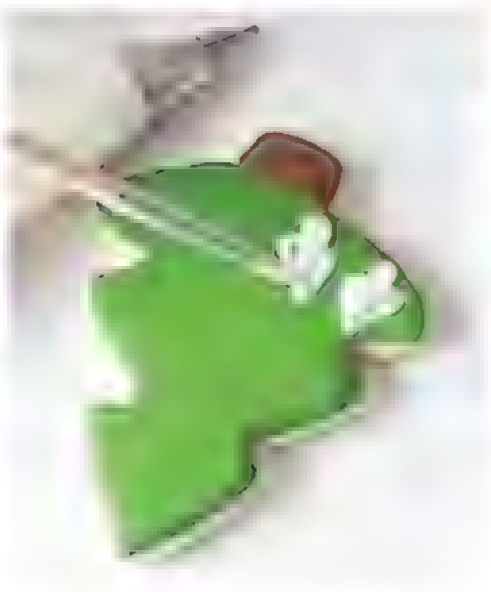
WINTER TREE COOKIES

With a paintbrush and bit of icing, our verdant green trees get a romantic dappling of winter snow.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
Royal Icing (recipe on page 40)
Wilton Gel Food Coloring in Kelly Green, Juniper Green, and Brown
Water, as needed
3 pastry bags
2 Wilton No. 1 piping tips
Squeeze bottle
1 Wilton No. 2 piping tip
36 (3½-inch) tree-shaped Christmas Sugar Cookies (recipe on page 40)
Wooden picks
Paintbrush

1. Divide Royal Icing among 3 bowls: 4 cups (720 grams) in the first, 1¾ cups (315 grams) in the second, and ¼ cup (45 grams) in the third. Cover bowls with a damp paper towel or kitchen towel to keep from drying out.
2. To the first bowl (4 cups [720 grams]), slowly add Kelly green food coloring until a bright green is reached; slowly add juniper green until the desired color is reached. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place 1 cup (180 grams) in a pastry bag fitted with a very small round tip (Wilton No. 1). To the remaining 3 cups (540 grams), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until flood consistency is reached. Place in a large squeeze bottle.
3. To the second bowl (1¾ cups [315 grams]), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached; cover airtight, and set aside.
4. To the third bowl (¼ cup [45 grams]), add brown food coloring until desired color is reached. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place in a pastry bag fitted with a very small round piping tip (Wilton No. 1).
5. Using green border icing, pipe an outline along edges of tree part of a cookie. Using green flood icing, fill in center. Using a wooden pick, remove any air bubbles and make sure there are no gaps in the icing. Using the brown icing, pipe border of trunk (including next to green icing). Fill in using the same consistency, and use a wooden pick to remove any air bubbles and make sure there are no gaps in the icing. Repeat with remaining cookies. Let dry for 2 to 3 hours.
6. Place white border icing in a pastry bag fitted with small round tip (Wilton No. 2). Place paintbrush in water. Starting at the base of the tree, pipe a row of dots, keeping in mind they will be grouped in 2 or 3. Remove brush from water, and wipe off excess water. Place brush tip in the center of each dot and brush away from you, creating groups of 2 or 3 that meet. (Wipe off any excess icing as needed that the brush picks up.) Place brush back in water and then pipe another row of dots. Remove any excess water from the brush, and repeat procedure until you reach the top of the tree. Repeat with remaining cookies. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Decoration Details: Winter Tree Cookies



1. Once your green and brown base icing has dried, you can begin creating snowy details. Place white border icing in a pastry bag fitted with a small round tip (Wilton No. 2). Place paintbrush in water. Starting at the base of the tree, pipe a row of dots, keeping in mind they will be grouped in 2 or 3. These should be generous dots of icing, not tiny pinpoints, so you can brush them into snowy sweeps.

2. Remove brush from water, and wipe off excess water. Too much water on the brush will dilute your icing and make you lose definition. Place brush tip in the center of each dot and brush away from you, creating groups of 2 or 3 that meet. It should look like dimpled teardrops that join thinly at the top.

3. A fine-tipped paintbrush like the one we used tends to spring into a narrow cone shape. We want a more fanned-out broom shape, leaving dramatic swept trails in the icing. If you start losing the detailed sweep look, flatten your brush tip between your fingers to fan it out again.
4. Continue to dot and sweep your way to the top of your cookie. Use 2-dot clusters in narrow spaces at the top and edges. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes.

SNOWFLAKE COOKIES

Complete with two icy designs, these cookies look like the intricate inner workings of a snowflake. In reality, a simple series of lines, dots, and "V" shapes make up its pattern, offering the gold standard of royal iced cookies: easy execution, dazzling results.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Royal Icing (recipe on page 40)
Wilton Gel Food Coloring in Cornflower Blue
Water, as needed
3 pastry bags
2 Wilton No. 1 piping tips
Squeeze bottle
36 (3⅛-inch) snowflake-shaped Christmas Sugar Cookies (recipe on page 40)
Wooden picks
Wilton No. 2 piping tip
White pearls
Tweezers

1. Divide Royal Icing into 3 bowls: 4 cups (720 grams) in the first, 1½ cups (270 grams) in the second, and ½ cup (90 grams) in the third. Cover bowls with a damp paper towel or kitchen towel to keep from drying out.
2. To the first bowl (4 cups [720 grams]), add cornflower blue food coloring, until a soft blue or desired color is reached. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached. Place 1 cup (180 grams) in a pastry bag fitted with a very small round tip (Wilton No. 1). To the remaining 3 cups (540 grams), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until flood consistency is reached. Place in a large squeeze bottle.
3. To the second bowl (1½ cups [270 grams]), add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached; cover airtight, and set aside.
4. To the third bowl (½ cup [90 grams]), add cornflower blue food coloring until dark blue or desired color is reached. Add water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until border consistency is reached; cover airtight, and set aside.
5. Using the light blue border icing, pipe an outline along edges of a cookie. Using light blue flood icing, fill in center. Using a wooden pick, remove any air bubbles and make sure there are no gaps in the icing. Repeat with remaining cookies. Let dry for 2 to 3 hours.
6. Place white border icing in a pastry bag fitted with very small round tip (Wilton No. 1). Place dark blue border icing in a pastry bag fitted with a small round tip (Wilton No. 2).
7. For design 1: Starting at one tip of snowflake, pipe a thin white line to the opposite tip, leaving a rounded end at each tip. Repeat with the remaining tips, making sure each line (there will be 3 total) meets the others in the center. On each line going from the center, pipe 3 "V" shapes with the points going toward the center. Using the dark blue, pipe a small dot between each line (there will be 6) and 1 larger dot in the center, where the white lines meet.
8. For design 2: Starting at one tip of snowflake, pipe a thin white line to the opposite tip, leaving a rounded end at each tip and making sure to leave space for a dot at each tip. Repeat with the remaining tips, making sure each line (there will be 3 total) meets the others in the center. Pipe smaller lines over the center, between the larger lines (3 total). On each larger line going from the center, pipe 2 "V" shapes with the points going toward the center. Using the dark blue, pipe small dots at each tip of the snowflake; pipe dots between the "V" shapes on each line (1 on each side of the line), and pipe a small dot at the end of the smaller lines coming from the center. Place a white pearl in the center. (Use tweezers for easier placement.) Repeat with remaining cookies. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Decoration Details: Snowflake Cookies Design #1

1. Starting at one tip of the snowflake, pipe a thin white line to the opposite tip, leaving a rounded end at each tip. Repeat with the remaining tips, making sure each line (there will be 3 total) meets the others in the center. Like when piping a border, you'll make a thread of icing that'll span the expanse of the cookie, only touching down on the cookie with your tip to create the rounded ends.
2. On each line going from the center, pipe 3 "V" shapes with the points going toward the center. Try to keep the "V" shapes tucked to the main line so that as you pipe more "V" shapes on the other lines, they won't overlap and touch.
3. Using the dark blue, pipe a small dot between each line (there will be 6) and 1 larger dot in the center, where the white lines meet. Let dry until hardened, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week

Design #2

Design 1 is slightly simpler than design 2, but have similar steps. After making the long bisecting lines mentioned in step 1, you'll pipe smaller lines over the center, between the larger lines (3 total). Then you'll pipe 2 "V" shapes at the top of each of the longer lines. A smattering of blue dots fills the empty space, and a pearl sprinkle is placed in the center as a crowning jewel. Use tweezers for exact pearl placement so you keep from accidentally smudging the icing.

Pretty in Pearl

WITH PEARL SUGAR IN YOUR PANTRY, THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER. WE'RE OFFERING THREE RECIPES THAT UNLOCK THE POWER OF BELGIAN AND SWEDISH PEARL SUGAR, FROM TRADITIONAL SWEDISH *KANELBULLAR* TO A REVOLUTIONARY FRUITCAKE-COFFEE CAKE HYBRID.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WILLIAM DICKEY** / STYLING BY **CAROLINE BLUM**

Swedish
Cinnamon Buns
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Our Pearls of Sugar Wisdom

There are two common pearl sugar varieties: Belgian and Swedish. The sugars differ primarily in pearl size. Belgian offers a bigger granule, which can handle higher heat and maintains its shape better. It is often mixed into doughs and batters where it can melt or caramelize, like in our Suikerbrood or the classic Liège waffle. Swedish pearl sugar is smaller and used mainly as a topping or garnish, like for our Swedish Cinnamon Buns. Despite their differences, they are both equally impressive. We find using Lars Own pearl sugar yields excellent results.

Buy Lars Own Belgian Pearl Sugar and Lars Own Swedish Pearl Sugar at amazon.com *or at specialty food stores.*

PEARL SUGAR STREUSEL COFFEE-FRUITCAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

Coffee cake meets fruitcake in a chic rendition of flavors. Dried cranberries, candied orange, and candied ginger get a luxurious bath in fragrant brandy while spices reminiscent of the holidays infuse the silky batter. We swapped out the usual sour cream for tangy crème fraîche to create an extra-elegant crumb. To top it all off, Swedish pearl sugar adds a surprise crunch to the crispy streusel that will have your cup of coffee begging for more.

- 1 cup (210 grams) brandy
- ⅓ cup (53 grams) lightly packed sweetened dried cranberries, roughly chopped
- ⅓ cup (50 grams) lightly packed finely chopped candied orange
- 3 tablespoons (40 grams) lightly packed finely chopped candied ginger
- ⅔ cup (150 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ⅔ cup (147 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 1⅔ cups (208 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (8 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
- ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅔ cup (160 grams) crème fraîche, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- Pearl Sugar Streusel (recipe follows)
- ¼ cup (48 grams) Swedish pearl sugar
- Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. In a small saucepan, bring brandy just to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from heat; stir in cranberries, candied orange, and candied ginger. Cover and let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain fruit mixture, reserving brandy.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour. Line bottom of pan with parchment paper.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together 1⅔ cups (208 grams) flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, ground ginger, nutmeg, and cloves. In a small bowl, stir together crème fraîche, 1 tablespoon (13 grams) reserved brandy, and vanilla. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with crème fraîche mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition.
5. In a small bowl, stir together fruit mixture and remaining 1 tablespoon (8 grams) flour; fold into batter. Spread batter in prepared pan. Crumble Pearl Sugar Streusel on top. (Crumble layer will be quite thick.) Sprinkle with pearl sugar.
6. Bake until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking and loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove sides of pan. Let cool completely on base of pan on a wire rack. Garnish with confectioners' sugar, if desired.

PRO TIP

The leftover strained brandy can be used as a boozy flavoring for other cakes and baked goods. It also makes a great addition to cocktails, coffee, and more!

Pearl Sugar Streusel

Makes 1½ cups

- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (124 grams) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1⅓ cups (167 grams) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- ⅓ cup (64 grams) Swedish pearl sugar

1. In a medium bowl, stir together granulated sugar, melted butter, vanilla, and salt until well combined. Add flour and baking powder; stir until well combined. Fold in pearl sugar.

SWEDISH CINNAMON BUNS

Makes about 18 buns

Twisted into adorable bows and sprinkled with crunchy Swedish pearl sugar, these pillow-soft buns are bursting with fragrant holiday spices, taking inspiration from the Swedish cinnamon bun, kanelbulle.

Dough:

3¼ to 3½ cups (406 to 437 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
2¼ teaspoons (7 grams) instant yeast
1½ teaspoons (4.5 grams) kosher salt
1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground cardamom
1 cup (240 grams) whole milk
⅓ cup (76 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature

Filling:

½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature*
½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
4 teaspoons (8 grams) ground cinnamon
2½ teaspoons (5 grams) ground cardamom
1¼ teaspoons (2.5 grams) ground ginger
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

1 large egg (50 grams), lightly beaten
1 tablespoon (15 grams) water
Swedish pearl sugar, for sprinkling

1. For dough: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 1 cup (125 grams) flour, granulated sugar, yeast, salt, and cardamom at low speed just until combined.

2. In a medium saucepan, heat milk and butter over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until butter is melted and an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add warm milk mixture to flour mixture; beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. Add egg; beat at medium-high speed for 2 minutes. Gradually add 2¼ cups (281 grams) flour, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.

3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at medium-low speed until a soft, smooth, elastic dough forms, 6 to 9 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook; add up to remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if needed. (Dough may still stick slightly to sides of bowl.) Check dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. (See Note.) Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 30 to 45 minutes.

4. For filling: In a medium bowl, stir together butter, brown sugar, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, cloves, pepper, and salt until well combined.

5. Punch down dough; cover and let stand for 5 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 22x15-inch rectangle, one short side closest to you. Using a large offset spatula, dot filling onto dough, and spread in an even layer all the way to edges. Fold dough in thirds like a letter. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet; cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 10 minutes.

6. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

7. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 15x8-inch rectangle, one long side closest to you. Using a pastry wheel or pizza cutter, cut into 18 strips (about 8x¾ inches each). Holding a strip with one end in each hand, twist strip 5 times, gently stretching until it is nearly double its original length. Grabbing one end of twisted strip between middle 2 or 3 fingers and thumb of same hand, loosely wrap dough around fingers twice, overlapping slightly. Place thumb of same hand over overlapped dough strands to secure; wrap remaining end of dough perpendicularly around overlapping dough strands to form a knot-like shape, tucking loose end under bottom of finished bun. Place buns 1½ to 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size and dough holds an indentation when poked, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

9. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water. Brush egg wash on top of buns. Sprinkle with pearl sugar.

10. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers at least 190°F (88°C), 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking and covering loosely with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Serve warm.

**Unlike softened butter, room temperature butter should provide no resistance when pressed with a finger. At this point, the butter is softened enough to easily spread over dough.*

Note: *To use the windowpane test to check dough for proper gluten development, pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute, and test again.*

SUIKERBROOD

Makes 1 (8½x4½-inch) loaf

An ultra-sweet Dutch specialty hailing from Friesland, a Northern province of the Netherlands, suikerbrood, *which translates to "sugar bread," is a spiced loaf with a surprise interior. Slice into the bread to unveil a hypnotizing amber swirl and glistening pockets of sugar courtesy of Belgian pearl sugar.*

2½ to 2¾ cups (313 to 344 grams) all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon (12 grams) granulated sugar
1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) instant yeast*
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
⅔ cup (160 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) whole milk, divided
¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature and divided
2 tablespoons (40 grams) Honey-Ginger Syrup (recipe follows)
¾ cup (120 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (20 grams) Belgian pearl sugar, divided
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground ginger

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 1 cup (125 grams) flour, granulated sugar, yeast, and salt at medium-low speed until combined.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat ⅔ cup (160 grams) milk and butter over medium heat until butter is melted and an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add warm milk mixture to flour mixture; beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. Add 1 egg (50 grams) and Honey-Ginger Syrup; beat at medium-high speed for 2 minutes. Gradually add 1½ cups (188 grams) flour, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at medium-low speed until a soft, smooth, elastic dough forms, 6 to 9 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook; add up to remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if needed. (Dough may still stick slightly to sides of bowl.) Check dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. (See Note on page 53.) Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 30 to 45 minutes.
4. Spray an 8½x4½-inch loaf pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan; lightly spray parchment.
5. Add ¾ cup (120 grams) pearl sugar to dough in mixer bowl; return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, and beat at medium-low speed just until pearl sugar is well combined, about 1 minute, kneading in sugar by hand toward end, if necessary. Gently form dough into a round; cover and let stand for 20 minutes.
6. Gently punch down dough. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 14x6-inch rectangle, pushing any pearl sugar pieces that fall out back into dough.
7. In a small bowl, stir together cinnamon and ginger. Sprinkle cinnamon mixture evenly over dough, leaving a ¼-inch border around edges. Starting at one short side, roll up dough, jelly roll style; pinch seam to seal. Place, seam side down, in prepared pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size and dough holds an indentation when poked, 30 to 45 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
9. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg (50 grams) and remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) milk. Brush egg wash on top of loaf. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons (20 grams) pearl sugar.
10. Bake for 15 minutes. Loosely cover with foil, rotate pan, and bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 20 to 25 minutes more. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack.

**We used Platinum® Yeast from Red Star®.*

Honey-Ginger Syrup

Makes about 3 tablespoons

¼ cup (38 grams) ⅛-inch-sliced unpeeled fresh ginger
¼ cup (60 grams) water
3 tablespoons (63 grams) clover honey

1. In a small saucepan, combine ginger, ¼ cup (60 grams) water, and honey; using a wooden spoon, gently muddle ginger. Bring just to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat; cover and let stand for 30 minutes.
2. Strain syrup mixture through a fine-mesh sieve, discarding solids. Let cool to room temperature before using. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

PRO TIP

Leftover Honey-Ginger Syrup is a great addition to tea, cocktails, sparkling water, and more. It can also be swirled into your favorite preserves, to taste, for a little flavor twist.

Pear and Cranberry Kuchen
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CUE THE CUSTARD

CUSTARD, THE SIMPLE YET POWERFUL COMBINATION OF DAIRY, EGGS, AND SUGAR, OFFERS EVERYTHING YOU COULD WANT IN A HOLIDAY DESSERT: RICH FLAVOR, LUXURIOUS TEXTURE, AND VERSATILITY. WE BRING THE CUSTOMIZABLE MAGIC OF CUSTARD TO COOKIES, KUCHEN, CHEESECAKE, AND MORE—ALL WHILE MAINTAINING ITS ORIGINAL GLORY.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE
FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA ROCCHIO
STYLING BY MARY BETH JONES

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ORANGE-ANISE BASQUE CHEESECAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

This cheesecake is all custard, no filler. An iconic crustless cheesecake from the Basque region of Spain, the Basque cheesecake has a starkly scorched top with a creamy, just-set interior thanks to a high-temperature bake. We infused our custard with orange zest and star anise, aromatics that often make their way into mulled wine, for a holiday twist.

- **1 large orange (184 grams)**
- **2¼ cups (540 grams) heavy whipping cream**
- **3 whole star anise (3 grams), lightly crushed**
- **3 (8-ounce) packages (680 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **1⅓ cups (267 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **5 large eggs (250 gram), room temperature**
- **2 teaspoons (10 grams) tightly packed orange zest**
- **1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **¼ cup (31 grams) all-purpose flour**

1. Using a peeler, remove zest from orange in 1-inch strips.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat zest strips, cream, and star anise over medium-low heat just until steaming and a film forms on top. (Do not boil.) Remove from heat, and let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, and measure 1⅔ cups (400 grams) infused cream; discard zest strips, star anise, and any remaining liquid.
3. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a 9-inch springform pan with 2 (16¼x12¼-inch) sheets of parchment paper placed perpendicular to each another; spray parchment with cooking spray. Place prepared pan on a rimmed baking sheet.
4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add sugar and salt; beat at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until well combined, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in orange zest and vanilla bean paste. With mixer on low speed, add infused cream in a slow, steady stream; increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until well combined, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Sift flour over batter; beat at low speed until combined and smooth. Pour batter into prepared springform pan. Gently tap sides of pan 2 to 3 times to release any large air bubbles.
5. Bake until deep golden brown, center is very jiggly, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 170°F (77°C) to 175°F (79°C), 50 minutes to 1 hour. Place baking sheet on a wire rack, and let cheesecake cool to room temperature, about 2 hours. Serve immediately, or refrigerate in pan on wire rack until chilled, 4 to 5 hours or up to overnight. (If refrigerating overnight, cover loosely with foil once cooled to room temperature.) Carefully remove from pan, and transfer to a serving plate. If chilled, let stand until room temperature, at least 30 minutes, before serving.

PEPPERMINT CUSTARD-STUFFED CHOCOLATE COOKIES

Makes about 27 cookies

Cookies get all kinds of delicious fillings these days, but our peppermint custard-filled cookies take it to the next level. These peppermint candy-topped chocolate cookies hide a wintry pastry cream flavored with both peppermint extract and soft peppermint candies. To streamline this process, feel free to make both the pastry cream and the cookie dough a day before baking.

- **1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2¼ cups (450 grams) granulated sugar**
- **3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature**
- **1½ teaspoons (6 grams) peppermint extract**
- **4 cups (500 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup (85 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder, sifted**
- **4½ teaspoons (22.5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **Peppermint Pastry Cream (recipe follows)**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) water**
- **1½ cups (270 grams) crushed soft peppermint candies**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in peppermint extract.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Cover and refrigerate until dough doesn't stick to your fingers when pinched, 30 to 45 minutes.

3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 4 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 26 grams each), and roll into balls. Press balls into 2½-inch disks. Place 2 teaspoons (12 grams) Peppermint Pastry Cream in center of half of disks; cover with remaining disks, and crimp edges closed. Gently shape into balls, and place on prepared pans; gently press into 2¼-inch disks, pressing together any cracks in edges, if necessary. Brush tops of cookies with 2 tablespoons (30 grams) water; top with candies.
5. Bake until edges are set and tops look dry, 12 to 14 minutes. (See Note.) Carefully top with any remaining candies. Let cool completely on pans.

Note: *If you need to bake the cookies in batches, refrigerate any disks that are waiting to be baked.*

Peppermint Pastry Cream
Makes about 1¾ cups

1½ cups (360 grams) whole milk
6 tablespoons (72 grams) granulated sugar, divided
3 large egg yolks (56 grams)
3½ tablespoons (28 grams) cornstarch
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
2 tablespoons (16 grams) finely crushed soft peppermint candies
1 tablespoon (14 grams) unsalted butter, softened
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) peppermint extract

1. In a medium saucepan, heat milk and 3 tablespoons (36 grams) sugar over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until steaming. (Do not boil.)
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together egg yolks, cornstarch, salt, and remaining 3 tablespoons (36 grams) sugar. Whisk hot milk mixture into egg yolk mixture. Return mixture to sauce pan, and bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Cook, whisking constantly, until cornstarch flavor has cooked out, 2 to 3 minutes. (Mixture will be thick.) Remove from heat, and strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium heatproof bowl. Stir in candies, butter, and extracts until completely combined. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until completely cooled, 2 to 3 hours or up to overnight. Whisk smooth before using.

GINGERBREAD CUSTARD BARS
Makes 9 bars

Based on the Pinterest wonder called magic custard cake, this recipe harnesses the chemistry of custard to create a miraculous baked good. One batter becomes three distinct layers during baking: fudgy bottom, custard center, and fluffy cake top. Breaking it down scientifically, you're separating your eggs to create two distinct bases, whipped egg whites like for a sponge cake and beaten, thickened egg yolks like for a custard. They are then mixed and folded in with flour, confectioners' sugar, and plenty of milk. During baking, the dense custard to sink and form a rich base and middle while the egg white-lightened batter rises to the top.

5 large eggs (250 grams), separated and room temperature
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided
10 tablespoons (140 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
3 tablespoons (63 grams) unsulphured molasses
1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground ginger
2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground nutmeg
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground allspice
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves
2½ cups (600 grams) lukewarm whole milk (80°F/27°C to 85°F/29°C)
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites and cream of tartar at medium-high speed until foamy, about 30 seconds. With mixer on medium-high speed, add ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar in a slow, steady steam; increase mixer speed to high, and beat until stiff peaks form, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl, and set aside.
3. Return bowl to stand mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat egg yolks and remaining ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar at medium-high speed until pale yellow and mixture falls off paddle in ribbons, 2 to 3 minutes; scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on medium-low speed, add melted butter in a slow, steady stream; add molasses in a slow, steady stream. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until well combined, about 1 minute.
4. In another medium bowl, whisk together flour, ginger, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to egg yolk mixture, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, add lukewarm milk in a slow, steady stream, stopping to scrape sides of bowl several times to make sure its evenly combined. Beat in vanilla. Using a balloon whisk, fold in egg white mixture in three additions. Pour into prepared pan.
5. Bake until lightly golden, center is barely jiggly, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 170°F (77°C) to 175°F (79°C), 30 to 40 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Garnish with confectioners' sugar, if desired. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Serve room temperature or chilled.

PEAR AND CRANBERRY KUCHEN

Makes 1 (9-inch) tart

Kuchen, the German word for "cake," can mean a number of things, depending on where you live. In North and South Dakota, the kuchen you can expect is a cross between a pie and a tart, with a pastry crust filled with a blend of seasonal fruit and, of course, custard. This historic baked good was brought over by Germanic homesteaders who settled in the Dakotas, and it has since become the state dessert of South Dakota. Our version honors its forebearers with a simple spiced shortcrust filled with a generous pour of custard and an artful arrangement of pears and cranberries.

Spiced Shortcrust Pastry (recipe follows)
2 medium Anjou pears (314 grams), peeled, halved, stemmed, and cored
2 teaspoons (10 grams) fresh lemon juice
⅔ cup (160 grams) heavy whipping cream
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
2 large egg yolks (38 grams)
⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
¾ cup (83 grams) fresh or frozen cranberries
Garnish: confectioners' sugar, apricot preserves

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Top prepared Spiced Shortcrust Pastry with a piece of parchment paper, letting ends extend over edges of pan. Add pie weights.
3. Bake until edges look dry, about 15 minutes. Carefully remove parchment and weights. Bake until bottom crust looks dry, about 5 minutes more. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F (150°C).
4. Slice each pear half lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices. Working with one half at a time, slide pieces into a line, and place, evenly spaced, in a line in prepared crust. Brush lemon juice all over pears.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together cream, granulated sugar, egg yolks, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. Pour mixture between pears in crust; sprinkle cranberries on top.
6. Bake until edges are set, center jiggles slightly, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 170°F (77°C) to 175°F (79°C), 40 to 50 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Serve immediately, or refrigerate until ready to serve. Just before serving, place a 8-inch circle of parchment paper in center of tart, and dust confectioners' sugar onto outside edge, if desired. Brush pears with apricot preserves, if desired. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Spiced Shortcrust Pastry

Makes 1 (9-inch) crust

1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour
⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground ginger
¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking powder
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup (113 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
1 large egg (50 grams), lightly beaten
1 tablespoon (15 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. Spray a 9-inch fluted round removable-bottom tart pan with cooking spray.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat flour, sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, and cloves at low speed until combined. Add cold butter, and beat until mixture is crumbly and resembles fine bread crumbs and no large pieces of butter remain, 2 to 3 minutes. Add egg and cream, and beat at low speed until a dough forms. Press dough into bottom and up sides of prepared pan. (Alternatively, on a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 11-inch circle [about ¼ inch thick]; transfer to prepared pan, pressing into bottom and up sides.) Trim excess dough, and discard. Prick bottom of dough all over with a fork. Freeze until firm, 10 to 15 minutes.

ADVERTISING

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MAKES 2 SERVINGS

½ cup heavy whipping cream
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon, divided
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
4 teaspoons chocolate syrup
1½ cups strong New England Coffee® freshly brewed

1. Whip cream with sugar, ¼ teaspoon cinnamon and nutmeg
2. In each of two coffee mugs, add coffee, 2 teaspoons chocolate syrup and ¼ teaspoon cinnamon; stir
3. Top with spiced whipped cream and serve

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NEW ENGLAND COFFEE

1-2-3-4
Holiday Cakes
IT'S THE ICONIC 1-2-3-4 CAKE, ALL DONE UP IN ITS
HOLIDAY BEST. THE 1-2-3-4 CAKE IS BASED ON
ONE SIMPLE RECIPE EQUATION:
1 CUP BUTTER + 2 CUPS SUGAR + 3 CUPS FLOUR + 4 EGGS =
one flawless cake

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE
RECIPE DEVELOPMENT LAURA CRANDALL
FOOD STYLING BY MEGAN LANKFORD
STYLING BY MELISSA STURDIVANT SMITH

Easy to remember and a cinch to pull together, the beauty of the 1-2-3-4 cake lies not in only its simplicity but also in its versatility. Bakers looking for a foolproof recipe to use as their platform for revolutionary flavors return to this formula again and again. We, too, used this magic arithmetic to create four uniquely festive cakes, from a meringue-topped Hot Chocolate Marshmallow Cake to a four-layered white and red velvet showstopper. Out of the tried-and-true comes something brand-new.

HOT CHOCOLATE MARSHMALLOW CAKE

Makes 1 (8-inch) cake

For this cake take on hot chocolate, we envisioned a cake packed with cocoa flavor in the form of rich chocolate cake layers and even richer Chocolate Meringue Buttercream. In order to do this, we had to adjust the 1-2-3-4 formula slightly, decreasing the flour to 2½ cups and making up the ½-cup deficit with cocoa powder. The final touches—a marshmallow-like Italian Meringue blanket and warming dose of coffee liqueur brushed onto the baked cake layers—bring the comfort of a cup of cocoa to the cake stand.

- ¾ cup (180 grams) whole milk, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons (30 grams) hot chocolate cocoa powder*
- ½ cup (120 grams) plus 3 tablespoons (45 grams) coffee liqueur*, divided
- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- 2½ cups (313 grams) cake flour
- ½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- Chocolate Meringue Buttercream (recipe follows)
- 4 cups (296 grams) Italian Meringue (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 2 tall-sided 8-inch round cake pans with baking spray with flour.
2. In a small saucepan, heat milk over medium heat until steaming. (Do not boil.) Remove from heat, and whisk in hot chocolate powder until completely dissolved. Whisk in 3 tablespoons (45 grams) liqueur. Let cool slightly.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, unsweetened cocoa, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Divide batter between prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 28 to 30 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Trim cooled cake layers flat, and brush layers with remaining ½ cup (120 grams) liqueur. Place 1 cake layer on a cake plate; spread Chocolate Meringue Buttercream on top, and top with remaining cake layer. Spread Italian Meringue on top and sides of cake. Using a handheld kitchen torch, carefully brown meringue. Store in an airtight container. Best served same day, but finished cake can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.

**We used Guittard Grand Cacao Drinking Chocolate and Kahlúa.*

Chocolate Meringue Buttercream

Makes 1⅔ cups

- 2 cups (148 grams) Italian Meringue (recipe follows)
- ⅔ cup (150 grams) unsalted butter, softened and cubed
- 2 ounces (57 grams) 70% cacao bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled slightly

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, place 2 cups (148 grams) Italian Meringue. With mixer on high speed, add butter, about 1 tablespoon (14 grams) at a time, beating until well combined after each addition. Fold in melted chocolate. Use immediately.

Italian Meringue

Makes 6 cups

- 1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup (80 grams) water
- ⅔ cup (160 grams) egg whites, room temperature (about 5 large egg whites)
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
- ½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract

1. In a small saucepan, combine sugar and ⅓ cup (80 grams) water. Bring to a boil over high heat, being careful not to splash sides of pan, stirring to help sugar dissolve. (Do not stir once mixture starts to boil.) Cook until an instant-read thermometer registers 240°F (116°C).
2. Meanwhile, in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites and cream of tartar at medium speed until soft peaks form.
3. With mixer on medium speed, pour hot sugar syrup between side of bowl and whisk attachment in a slow, steady stream. Increase mixer speed to high, and beat until bowl is cool to the touch, 4 to 5 minutes. Beat in vanilla. Use immediately.

ALMOND-CRANBERRY CAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

Tart cranberries and nutty almond extract give the simple 1-2-3-4 cake a boost of bright holiday flavor. The Sugared Cranberries garnish serves a dual purpose, creating a beautiful holiday topping as well as a simple syrup that you'll brush onto your cake layers to make them extra-tender.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar**
- **4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature**
- **2 teaspoons (10 grams) tightly packed orange zest**
- **¾ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¾ teaspoon (3 grams) almond extract**
- **3 cups (375 grams) cake flour**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 cup (240 grams) whole milk, room temperature**
- **1½ cups (165 grams) fresh or frozen cranberries**
- **½ cup (140 grams) simple syrup, reserved from Sugared Cranberries (recipe follows)**

Almond Buttercream (recipe follows)
Garnish: lightly toasted sliced almonds, Sugared Cranberries (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 2 (9-inch) round cake pans with baking spray with flour.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in orange zest and extracts.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Transfer half of batter (about 323 grams) to a large bowl; fold in half of fresh or frozen cranberries. Fold remaining fresh or frozen cranberries into remaining batter in mixer bowl. Pour into prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
5. Trim cooled cake layers flat, and brush each layer with simple syrup. Spread 2 cups (490 grams) Almond Buttercream between layers. Spread remaining buttercream on top and sides of cake. Garnish with almonds and Sugared Cranberries, if desired.

Sugared Cranberries

Makes 1 cup

- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **½ cup (120 grams) water**
- **1 cup (110 grams) fresh cranberries**

1. In a medium saucepan, heat ½ cup (100 grams) sugar and ½ cup (120 grams) water over medium heat, stirring occasionally, just until sugar dissolves. Let cool slightly.
2. Stir cranberries into syrup. Remove cranberries using a slotted spoon, and let excess drip off. Place on a sheet of parchment paper, and let dry for 1 hour. Reserve ½ cup (140 grams) simple syrup for Almond-Cranberry Cake.
3. Toss together cranberries and remaining ½ cup (100 grams) sugar.

Almond Buttercream

Makes about 6 cups

- **2 cups (454 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 (2-pound) package (907 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **½ cup (120 grams) cold heavy whipping cream**
- **¼ teaspoon (1 gram) almond extract**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and salt at medium-low speed until smooth. Reduce mixer speed to low; add confectioners' sugar, about 1 cup (120 grams) at a time, alternately with cold cream, about 1 tablespoon (15 grams) at a time, beating until smooth after each addition. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until smooth and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes. Add almond extract, and beat until combined.

PECAN PIE CAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

Combining the beloved flavor of a pecan pie with the delicate texture of a 1-2-3-4 layer cake, this cake offers the best of both desserts. Hidden beneath a generous coat of Brown Sugar Buttercream is a moist brown sugar cake and a Pecan Pie Filling that'll immediately call to mind your favorite deep-dish dessert.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 cups (440 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**
- **3 cups (375 grams) cake flour**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 cup (240 grams) whole milk, room temperature**
- **Simple Syrup (recipe follows)**
- **Brown Sugar Buttercream (recipe follows)**
- **Pecan Pie Filling (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: finely chopped lightly toasted pecans**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 3 (9-inch) round cake pans with baking spray with flour.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and brown sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Divide batter among prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
5. Place 1 cooled cake layer on a cake plate. Brush layer with about 2½ tablespoons (45 grams) Simple Syrup. Place ½ cup (95 grams) Brown Sugar Buttercream in a small pastry bag; cut a ½-inch opening in tip. Pipe a border around edge of cake layer. Spoon half of Pecan Pie Filling (about 1¼ cups [about 337 grams]) on cake layer, and gently smooth until even and reaches piped border. Top with second cake layer, and repeat procedure. Top with remaining cake layer, and brush with remaining Simple Syrup. Reserve 1½ cups (285 grams) Brown Sugar Buttercream to decorate top of cake. Spread remaining buttercream on top and sides of cake. Using a cake comb, comb sides of cake. Gently press pecans high on sides of cake and a few at bottom, if desired. Place reserved buttercream in a large pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch open star tip (Ateco #824), and pipe a border around edge of cake. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Allow to come to room temperature before serving.

Simple Syrup

Makes ½ cup

- **⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar**
- **⅓ cup (80 grams) water**

1. In a medium saucepan, heat sugar and ⅓ cup (80 grams) water over medium heat, stirring occasionally, just until sugar dissolves. Let cool completely before using.

Brown Sugar Buttercream

Makes about 7 cups

- **1½ cups (330 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **1 cup (240 grams) egg whites, room temperature (about 8 large egg whites)**
- **⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar**
- **2⅔ cups (604 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**

1. In the heatproof bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together brown sugar, egg whites, and granulated sugar by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until sugars completely dissolve and an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C).
2. Carefully return bowl to stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, beat at high speed until bowl is cool to the touch, about 8 minutes. Add butter, 2 tablespoons (28 grams) at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in vanilla and salt. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let stand at room temperature for 2 hours and rewhip until smooth before using.

Pecan Pie Filling

Makes about 2½ cups

- **1½ cups (170 grams) chopped pecans**
- **⅔ cup (147 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **⅔ cup (226 grams) light corn syrup**
- **⅓ cup (76 grams) unsalted butter, cubed**
- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In a medium saucepan, stir together all ingredients. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring constantly, until thickened, 6 to 8 minutes. Let cool to room temperature before using.

cover recipe

VANILLA-RED VELVET LAYER CAKE

Makes 1 (8-inch) cake

One part vanilla, one part red velvet, full-on decadence. We adjusted the 1-2-3-4 cake formula slightly for the red velvet batter, replacing ¼ cup flour with ¼ cup cocoa powder. Styled with mesmerizing swirls of Cream Cheese Frosting, this is holiday cheer at its finest.

Vanilla layer:

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (12 grams) vanilla bean paste*
- 1½ cups (188 grams) cake flour
- 1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup (120 grams) whole milk, room temperature

Red velvet layer:

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups (156 grams) cake flour
- ¼ cup (21 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup (120 grams) whole milk, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) red liquid food coloring

Vanilla Simple Syrup (recipe follows)
Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 2 tall-sided 8-inch round cake pans with baking spray wih flour.
2. For vanilla layer: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla bean paste.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Pour batter into a prepared pan, smoothing top with an offset spatula.
4. For red velvet layer: Clean bowl of stand mixer and paddle attachment. Using the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla extract.
5. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Beat in food coloring. Pour batter into remaining prepared pan, smoothing top with an offset spatula.
6. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
7. Trim cooled cake layers flat; cut each layer in half horizontally. Place a red velvet cake layer on a cake plate. Brush with 2 tablespoons (36 grams) Vanilla Simple Syrup; spread 1 cup (225 grams) Cream Cheese Frosting on top. Place a red vanilla cake layer on top of frosting, and brush with 2 tablespoons (36 grams) simple syrup; spread 1 cup (225 grams) frosting on top. Repeat procedure with remaining red velvet layer. Top with remaining vanilla layer and brush with remaining Vanilla Simple Syrup. Spread a thin layer of frosting on top and sides of cake to create a crumb coat. Refrigerate until crumb coat is set, about 45 minutes. Cover remaining frosting, and refrigerate until ready to use.
8. Using a spatula, fold remaining frosting until a spreadable consistency is reached. Reserve 3½ cups (788 grams) frosting. Spread remaining frosting on top of cake, swirling as desired. Place reserved frosting in a large pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch open star piping tip (Ateco #824). Pipe 1¼-inch-wide ribbons in a zigzag motion up sides of cake. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

**We used Heilala Vanilla Bean Paste.*

Vanilla Simple Syrup

Makes about ½ cup

- ⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup (80 grams) water
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract

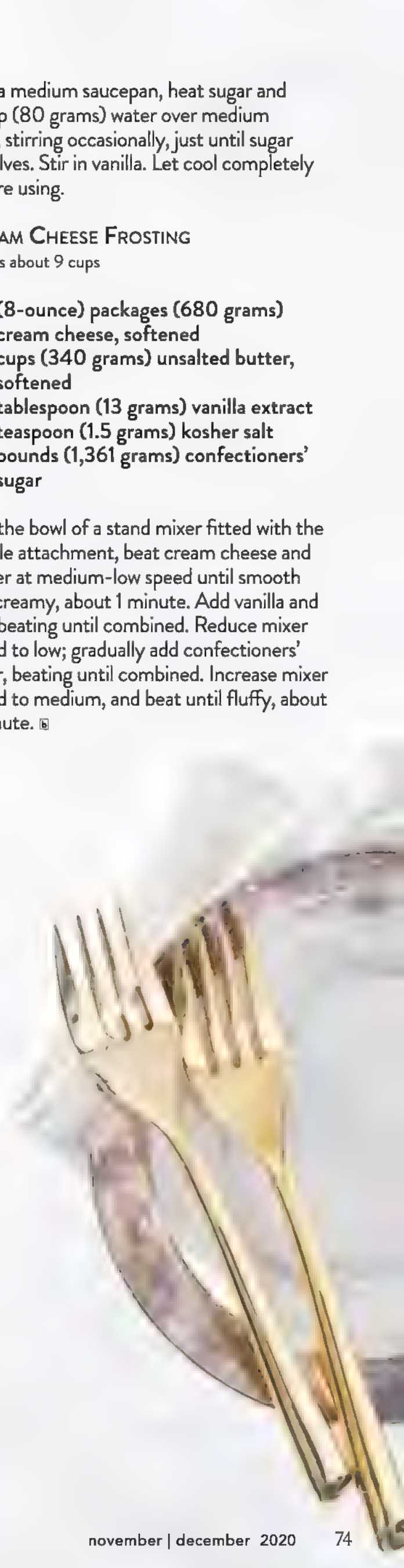
1. In a medium saucepan, heat sugar and ⅓ cup (80 grams) water over medium heat, stirring occasionally, just until sugar dissolves. Stir in vanilla. Let cool completely before using.

Cream Cheese Frosting

Makes about 9 cups

- 3 (8-ounce) packages (680 grams) cream cheese, softened
- 1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 3 pounds (1,361 grams) confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese and butter at medium-low speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Add vanilla and salt, beating until combined. Reduce mixer speed to low; gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, about 1 minute.



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BATHIE
FOOD STYLING BY KATHLEEN KANEN
STYLING BY CAROLINE BLUM

SPARKLING WINE CHOCOLATE GANACHE TART

Makes 1 (9½-inch) tart

Sparkling wine and chocolate are a winning combination, creating a celebratory tart ideal for this festive season. With a graham cracker crumb base, a semisweet ganache filling, and a sparkling wine-spiked white chocolate cream topping, this tart is chilled perfection. If you abstain from alcohol, you can easily make this tart into a purely chocolate and cream affair (see PRO TIP)—because a chocolate tart is a celebration in itself.

- **1½ cups (176 grams) chocolate graham cracker crumbs (about 12 sheets)**
- **2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar**
- **6 tablespoons (84 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **10 ounces (284 grams) 64% cacao semisweet chocolate*, finely chopped (about 1⅔ cups)**
- **2 cups (480 grams) cold heavy whipping cream, divided**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **⅓ cup (80 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (30 grams) brut sparkling white wine, divided**
- **6 ounces (170 grams) white chocolate*, finely chopped (about 1 cup)**
- **Garnish: dark chocolate crunchy pearls, semisweet chocolate shavings**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9½-inch fluted round removable-bottom tart pan with baking spray with flour.
2. In the work bowl of a food processor, combine graham cracker crumbs and sugar; pulse until well combined. Add melted butter; pulse until well combined and mixture holds together when pinched. Press graham cracker mixture into bottom and up sides of prepared pan.
3. Bake until crust is set and fragrant, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
4. In the top of a double boiler, combine semisweet chocolate, 1 cup (240 grams) cold cream, and salt. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat; gradually whisk in ⅓ cup (80 grams) sparkling wine until smooth and well combined. Pour mixture into prepared crust. Refrigerate until semisweet chocolate mixture is set, at least 3 hours or up to overnight.
5. In the clean top of a double boiler, combine white chocolate and ⅓ cup (80 grams) cold cream. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Transfer white chocolate mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer, and let cool to room temperature (70°F/21°C).
6. Using the whisk attachment, beat cooled white chocolate mixture at medium speed; gradually add remaining 2 tablespoons (30 grams) sparkling wine, beating until well combined. Reduce mixer speed to medium-low; slowly add ⅓ cup (80 grams) cold cream, beating until smooth and stopping frequently to scrape sides of bowl. Increase mixer speed to medium; gradually add remaining ⅓ cup (80 grams) cold cream, beating until medium-stiff peaks form. (Whisk by hand toward end if needed; do not overmix.) Spread and swirl topping on tart as desired, being careful not to overhandle white chocolate mixture. Garnish with chocolate pearls and chocolate shavings, if desired. Refrigerate until topping is set, about 30 minutes. Remove from pan, and serve immediately.

**We used Guittard 64% Cacao Semisweet Chocolate Baking Bars and Ghirardelli White Chocolate Baking Bars.*

PRO TIP

For a more subtle flavor, reduce the sparkling wine in the white chocolate topping to 1 tablespoon (15 grams). For an alcohol-free option, replace the sparkling wine in the filling with the same amount of heavy whipping cream and omit it in the white chocolate topping.

SPICED PLUM LINZER TORTE

Makes 1 (9½-inch) tart

Named after the city of Linz, Austria, the Linzer torte is a classic European pastry usually served during Christmas. Traditionally made with a buttery shortcrust dough accented by ground nuts, the Linzer torte often hides a jewel-toned jam filling beneath an elaborate lattice crust. We followed sweet tradition to a T, gently arranging a hazelnut flour and almond flour crust over a beautiful plum preserves filling.

- **1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1¼ cups (120 grams) finely ground hazelnut flour**
- **1 cup (96 grams) super-fine blanched almond flour**
- **⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar**
- **⅓ cup (73 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) tightly packed orange zest**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder**
- **¼ teaspoon ground ginger**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- **¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (198 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- **1 large egg (50 grams)**
- **1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **2 cups (600 grams) Damson plum preserves**
- **Confectioners' sugar, for dusting**

1. In the work bowl of a food processor, combine flours, granulated sugar, brown sugar, orange zest, salt, cinnamon, baking powder, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves; pulse until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add cold butter, and pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add egg and vanilla bean paste; pulse just until dough comes together, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Mixture should be moist but not sticky and should hold together when pinched.) Turn out dough onto a clean surface; reserve one-third of dough (about 264 grams), and cover with plastic wrap.

2. Spray a 9½-inch fluted round removable-bottom tart pan with baking spray with flour. Press remaining dough into bottom and up sides of prepared pan, trimming any excess with a small sharp knife; add any dough trimmings to reserved one-third of dough. Cover with plastic wrap.

3. Lightly flour a sheet of wax paper; place reserved dough on prepared wax paper, and lightly flour top of dough. Place another sheet of wax paper on dough, and roll dough into a 12-inch circle (about ⅛ inch thick); place on a baking sheet. Refrigerate rolled dough and dough in pan for 1 hour.

4. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

5. Using a small offset spatula, spread preserves evenly onto dough in pan.

6. Remove top wax paper from rolled dough; using a pastry wheel or pizza cutter, cut dough into 1-inch-wide strips; cover and refrigerate until firm, about 15 minutes.

7. Gently arrange strips about ½ inch apart in a lattice pattern over preserves; press strips into edges of dough in pan, trimming off excess to create a clean edge. (If dough becomes too soft, refrigerate in 15-minute intervals as needed; a lightly floured large offset spatula can help move strips.) Create additional strips as needed by rerolling excess dough to ⅛-inch thickness between lightly floured sheets of wax paper. (This is a delicate dough. If it tears while moving, simply press it back together; alternatively, reroll, cut, and refrigerate dough, and try again.) Refrigerate assembled tart for 20 minutes.

8. Bake until crust is golden brown and set and filling is starting to bubble, 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Remove from pan. Dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

POACHED PEAR BUTTERMILK TART

Makes 1 (9½-inch) tart

A sophisticated twist on buttermilk chess pie, this stunning tart combines a tangy, creamy buttermilk filling with a wine-poached pear topping. Our ginger-scented shortcrust pastry dough and poached pears can be made a day ahead of time offering a streamlined process for the busy baker.

- 1 (750-ml) bottle (750 grams) fruity white wine, such as pinot grigio
- 2½ cups (500 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 2 cups (480 grams) water
- 3 tablespoons (45 grams) fresh lemon juice
- 2 (2½- to 3-inch) cinnamon sticks
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 medium firm ripe Bartlett pears (404 grams), peeled, halved, stemmed, and cored
- Ginger Shortcrust Pastry (recipe follows)
- 2 tablespoons (16 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ⅔ cup (160 grams) whole buttermilk, room temperature
- ⅓ cup (80 grams) heavy whipping cream, room temperature
- ¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled for 5 minutes
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (12 grams) vanilla bean paste
- Garnish: finely chopped lightly toasted pistachios, sliced lightly toasted almonds, confectioners' sugar

1. In a large saucepan, combine wine, 2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar, 2 cups (480 grams) water, lemon juice, cinnamon sticks, and cloves. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add pears; place a round of parchment paper on surface of wine mixture, pressing down slightly to help keep pears submerged. Simmer, turning pears occasionally, until pears are fork-tender, 25 to 40 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer pears to a medium heatproof bowl.
2. Discard cinnamon sticks and cloves. Increase heat to medium-high; cook wine mixture until reduced to 3 cups, 15 to 18 minutes. Remove from heat; pour wine mixture over pears in bowl; place a sheet of plastic wrap directly on surface to keep pears submerged, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9½-inch fluted round removable-bottom tart pan with baking spray with flour.
4. Let pear wine mixture stand at room temperature until ready to use.
5. Let Ginger Shortcrust Pastry stand at room temperature until softened, about 15 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 12-inch circle (about ⅛ inch thick), flouring rolling pin and work surface as needed; trim dough slightly so circle has clean edges. Transfer dough to prepared pan, pressing into bottom and up sides; fold any overhanging dough inside, and press to create a double thickness. (It's OK if dough tears in spots; just press back together.) Using a small sharp knife, trim dough flush with sides of tart pan. Pinch sides lightly so dough sits about ⅛ inch above top edge of pan; use any extra dough to patch thinner spots in crust. Cover and freeze for 15 minutes.
6. Place tart pan on a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Top frozen dough with a sheet of parchment paper, letting ends extend over edges of tart pan. Add pie weights.
7. Bake until edges are lightly golden, 15 to 20 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Carefully remove parchment and weights. Bake until crust is dry and set, about 5 minutes more. Let cool completely on baking sheet on a wire rack.
8. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together flour, salt, and remaining ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar by hand. Add buttermilk, cream, melted butter, egg, egg yolk, and vanilla bean paste; using the whisk attachment, beat at medium speed until smooth and well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
9. Using a slotted spoon, remove pear halves from wine mixture. Pat pears dry, and slice each half lengthwise into 8 wedges. Arrange wedges in a tight overlapping circular pattern along edge of prepared crust. Pour buttermilk mixture in center of crust, shaking pan gently to evenly distribute between pears. (Pan will be quite full but will not overflow during baking.)
10. Bake until filling is just set (it may still jiggle in center) and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 170°F (76°C) to 175°F (79°C), 25 to 28 minutes. Let cool completely on baking sheet on a wire rack. Remove from tart pan. Before serving, garnish with pistachios, almonds, and confectioners' sugar, if desired.

Ginger Shortcrust Pastry

Makes 1 (9½-inch) crust

- 1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar
- 1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- ½ cup (113 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 large egg (50 grams), lightly beaten

1. In the work bowl of a food processor, place flour, sugar, ginger, and salt; pulse until combined. Add cold butter, and pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add egg, and pulse just until dough comes together, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Mixture should be moist but not sticky and should hold together when pinched.)
2. Turn out dough, and shape into a 7-inch disk. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 25 minutes.

Gluten-Free Hummingbird Cake

OUR TWELFTH LESSON IN THE BETTER BAKING ACADEMY WITH BOB'S RED MILL: GLUTEN-FREE HUMMINGBIRD CAKE

Bob's Red Mill is the official flour of the *Bake from Scratch* test kitchen and our partner in an amazing baking education program. For success in the kitchen, using premium flour is vital when creating delicious baked goods. But it's also crucial to master some essential baking techniques. We joined forces with Bob's Red Mill to ensure you have both key ingredients for success through the Better Baking Academy. In our 12th lesson, we conclude our first year of the academy with a gluten-free primer, transforming three of our most popular recipes with the aid of Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1-to-1 Baking Flour. Gingerbread Cookie Cheesecake Bars, Caramelized Banana Bread, and Hummingbird Cake all receive the gluten-free treatment, accompanied by helpful techniques.

A BREAKDOWN OF BOB'S RED MILL GLUTEN FREE 1-TO-1 BAKING FLOUR

Bob's Red Mill's signature gluten-free blend has a lot of wonderful things going on—here's a little info on the some of the key ingredients featured in the blend

An Employee-Owned Company
Bob's Red Mill
GLUTEN FREE
1 to 1
Baking Flour
Make Your Recipes Gluten Free
Use this astounding blend in place of
wheat flour in your favorite recipes for cookies,
cakes, brownies, pancakes, pies, muffins and more
YOU CAN SEE OUR QUALITY
624g

SWEET RICE AND BROWN RICE FLOUR: These two forms of rice flour are often used in gluten-free baking because the glutinous structure of rice helps batters and doughs gel into a homogeneous mixture. Sweet rice flour is much finer than traditional white rice flour and is ground from short-grain rice, like the kind used in sushi. Sweet rice flour is, thus, more glutinous and absorbent, making it a fantastic binder. In addition, its mild sweet flavor and tender qualities make moister, sweeter baked goods. Brown rice flour has a stronger, nuttier flavor but exhibits similar binding characteristics as the sweet rice flour. A common complaint for rice flour is its gritty texture. Bob's Red Mill sidesteps this problem by using a stone-ground milling process, which grinds the rice flour extra-fine for a smooth, powdery finish.

SORGHUM FLOUR: With a mild flavor that won't overpower your baked goods and a high protein level, sorghum flour is an excellent gluten-free flour. A very nutritious grain, sorghum has around 11% protein and 8% fiber, giving your baked goods structure and stability. Griddle cake and flapjack recipes featuring sorghum flour have been around since the 1800s, so it's not a new addition to the baking scene. Like rice flour, sorghum flour is very fine, mimicking the texture of traditional flour well.

POTATO STARCH, TAPIOCA STARCH, AND XANTHAN GUM: The previous flours mentioned all work well in gluten-free baking, but they require a little help from starches to mimic gluten's elasticity. A magical trio, potato starch, tapioca starch, and xanthan gum all provide binding power to the gluten-free flours. While made from the potato, potato starch has a very neutral flavor and will keep your baked goods tender. Tapioca starch, made from the cassava root, has a velvety texture and helps lighten your baked goods, keeping them from getting gummy. A favorite dupe for gluten, xanthan gum is a plant-based thickener, emulsifier, and all-around texture-booster. Too much of any one of these ingredients can compromise the texture and taste of your baked good, but a balanced blend of all three gives you the best of all worlds.

GLUTEN-FREE HUMMINGBIRD CAKE

Makes 1 (8-inch) cake

One of our most popular recipes of all time, our Hummingbird Cake is a classic Southern layer cake, packing pineapple, banana, and pecans under a dreamy Cream Cheese Frosting. This gluten-free version boasts the same iconic tropical flavor, tender texture, and creamy frosting. The best part? The only change to the original recipe is a simple swap of Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1-to-1 Baking Flour for all-purpose flour.

- **3 cups (444 grams) Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1-to-1 Baking Flour**
- **1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **¾ teaspoon (3.75 grams) baking soda**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **½ cup (57 grams) chopped toasted pecans**
- **1 cup (224 grams) canola oil**
- **¾ cup (170 grams) mashed ripe banana (about 2 medium bananas)**
- **3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1 cup (200 grams) chopped fresh pineapple**
- **4 cups (1,000 grams) Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe follows)**

Pineapple-Pecan Filling (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter 3 (8-inch) round cake pans. Line bottoms of pans with parchment paper.

2. In a large bowl, sift together flour, sugar, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, and nutmeg; stir in pecans.

3. In a small bowl, stir together oil, banana, eggs, and vanilla. Add oil mixture to flour mixture, stirring just until moistened. Fold in pineapple. Divide batter among prepared pans.

4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

5. Place a cooled cake layer on a cake plate. Place 1 cup (250 grams) Cream Cheese Frosting in a pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch round piping tip. (Alternatively, cut a ½-inch opening in tip of pastry bag.) Pipe around edge of cake layer. Spread half of Pineapple-Pecan Filling (about 300 grams) on layer inside piped border. Top with second cake layer, and pipe border around edge. Spread remaining Pineapple-Pecan Filling inside piped border. Top with remaining cake layer. Spread a thin layer of Cream Cheese Frosting on top and sides of cake to create a crumb coat. Refrigerate until filling is set, 30 to 45 minutes. Cover and refrigerate remaining frosting.

6. Using a spatula, fold remaining frosting until smooth and workable. Spread frosting on top and lightly on sides of cake. Using a bench scraper, smooth edges until desired amount of frosting is left. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to overnight before serving.

Cream Cheese Frosting

Makes about 6 cups

- **2 (8-ounce) packages (454 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1 (2-pound) package (907 grams) confectioners' sugar**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese and butter at medium-low speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Add vanilla, beating until combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, about 1 minute.

Pineapple-Pecan Filling

Makes 2½ cups

- **2 cups (500 grams) Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe precedes)**
- **½ cup (57 grams) finely chopped toasted pecans**
- **⅓ cup (67 grams) finely chopped fresh pineapple, patted dry**

1. In a medium bowl, gently stir together Cream Cheese Frosting, pecans, and pineapple until combined.

FROSTING 411

1. Place a cooled cake layer on a cake plate. Place 1 cup (250 grams) Cream Cheese Frosting in a pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch round piping tip. (Alternatively, cut a ½-inch opening in tip of pastry bag.) Pipe a border around edge of cake layer. Think of this piped border as a sweet dam. This border will keep your filling from spilling out and seeping into the frosting on the outside of the cake.

2. Spread half of Pineapple-Pecan Filling on layer inside piped border. You want to smooth down the filling slightly so your cake layers will stack evenly. Our tools of choice? An offset spatula or a straight-sided icing spatula.

3. Top with second cake layer, and pipe a border around edge. Spread remaining Pineapple-Pecan Filling inside piped border. Top with remaining cake layer. As you place your second cake layer on top of the first, press it down lightly on top to make sure everything is even and level.

4. Spread a thin layer of Cream Cheese Frosting on top and sides of cake to create a crumb coat. A crumb coat is the baker's term for a thin coat of frosting spread over a cake that is then refrigerated before being frosted with the final, thicker layer of frosting. The crumb coat helps keep any crumbs from getting into the final coat and fills any gaps where the border missed.

5. Refrigerate until filling is set, 30 to 45 minutes. Cover and refrigerate remaining frosting. Chilling your cake allows the filling to set and helps firm up the crumb coat, making it easier to frost. You also need to refrigerate your frosting, as it will get too soft at room temperature while the cake chills.

6. Using a spatula, fold remaining frosting until smooth and workable. This just ensures that the frosting is an even consistency and smooth before working with it on the cake.

7. Spread frosting on top and lightly on sides of cake. Using a bench scraper, smooth edges until desired amount of frosting is left. Use an offset spatula or straight-sided icing spatula to apply the frosting in generous swaths. Then switch to a bench scraper to smooth and scrape down the sides. The bench scraper will leave the frosting in an even layer all the way around, as well as make the sides straight.

8. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to overnight before serving. A last chill in the refrigerator will further set up your smooth frosting and pineapple-rich filling.

better BAKING ACADEMY

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'Twas the Night before Christmas

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA ROCCHIO
STYLING BY LUCY FINNEY

. . . WHEN ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE, NOT A CREATURE WAS STIRRING, NOT EVEN A MOUSE. THAT INCLUDES YOU, BUSY BAKER. WHY? BECAUSE YOUR HOLIDAY BRUNCH IS ALREADY PREPPED AND WAITING IN THE REFRIGERATOR. COME THAT BRIGHT CHRISTMAS MORN, YOU CAN DEVOTE PRECIOUS TIME TO ENJOYING FAMILY AND PRESENTS, NOT MIXING DOUGH. THEN, WHEN THE MERRY REVELERS BECOME HUNGRY, PREHEAT YOUR OVEN— PULL-APART MILK BREAD, EGGNOG ROLLS, AND PEPPERMINT SCONES AWAIT.

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Eggnog Sweet Rolls
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White Chocolate-Peppermint Scones
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PULL-APART MILK BREAD WREATH

Makes 20 rolls

Our savory pull-apart bread wreath features the most versatile of doughs, Japanese milk bread—a tender enriched dough that receives a moist boost from tangzhong, or Milk Roux. Packed with dill, butter, and garlic powder, the bread dough is mixed, proofed, shaped, and assembled the day before. The day of, only a final proof and short bake remains!

- ⅔ cup (160 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) whole milk, room temperature and divided
- 4 tablespoons (48 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) active dry yeast*
- Milk Roux (recipe follows), room temperature
- 3 to 3¼ cups (381 to 413 grams) bread flour
- ¼ cup (57 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (28 grams) unsalted butter, melted and divided
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature and divided
- 3 tablespoons (8 grams) lightly packed chopped fresh dill
- 2¼ teaspoons (6.75 grams) kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) garlic powder
- Everything bagel seasoning, for sprinkling
- Garnish: chopped fresh dill

1. In a small microwave-safe bowl, heat ⅔ cup (160 grams) milk on high in 10-second intervals until an instant-read thermometer registers 110°F (43°C) to 115°F (46°C).

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, whisk together warm milk, 1 tablespoon (12 grams) sugar, and yeast. Let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes.

3. Add Milk Roux, 3 cups (381 grams) flour, ¼ cup (57 grams) melted butter, 1 egg (50 grams), dill, salt, garlic powder, and remaining 3 tablespoons (36 grams) sugar to yeast mixture; beat at low speed just until combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.

4. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at low speed for 3 minutes. Increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until a soft, smooth dough forms, 6 to 8 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl; add up to remaining ¼ cup (32 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if dough is too sticky. Check dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. (See Note.) Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour.

5. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place a 1¾-inch round metal cutter in center of prepared pan.

6. Punch down dough; let stand for 5 minutes. Divide dough into 20 portions (about 38 grams each). Roll each portion into a ball, pinching any seams closed if needed. Place 6 dough balls in a circle around cutter, leaving a ¼-inch gap between dough balls and cutter. Place remaining dough balls, evenly spaced and almost touching, outside first circle. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

7. Let rolls rise, covered, in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size and dough holds an indentation when poked, 1 to 2 hours.

8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

9. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg (50 grams) and remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) milk.

10. Gently remove cutter from center of pan; brush egg wash on top of dough.

11. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers at least 190°F (88°C), 15 to 18 minutes. Brush tops of warm rolls with remaining 2 tablespoons (28 grams) melted butter. Sprinkle with everything bagel seasoning. Garnish with dill, if desired. Serve immediately.

**We used Red Star® Active Dry Yeast.*

Note: *To use the windowpane test to check dough for proper gluten development, lightly flour hands and pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute, and test again.*

Milk Roux

Makes about ⅓ cup

- ⅓ cup (80 grams) whole milk
- 2 tablespoons (16 grams) bread flour

1. In a small saucepan, whisk together milk and flour. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until thickened, an instant-read thermometer registers 149°F (65°C), and whisk leaves lines on bottom of pan. Transfer to a small bowl, and let cool completely before using.

Make-Ahead Timeline

1 DAY BEFORE:

- Make dough.
- Proof dough, 40 minutes to 1 hour.
- Divide dough and shape into a wreath.
- Cover and refrigerate overnight.

DAY OF:

- Proof dough, 1 to 2 hours.
- Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
- Brush dough with egg wash.
- Bake for 15 to 18 minutes.
- Brush with butter; sprinkle with seasoning and dill.
- Enjoy!

EGGNOG SWEET ROLLS

Makes 12 rolls

Regular sweet rolls will do for any day—for this special day, take it up a notch with our Eggnog Sweet Rolls. You'll mix, proof, fill, and shape your sweet rolls the night before. Then, before you dig into your presents, pull the rolls out for a final proof. While the rolls bake, you can quickly whisk together your Eggnog-Rum Glaze. If tiny tots or alcohol-abstainers are expected at the table, you can replace the rum in the glaze with 1½ tablespoons (22.5 grams) water.

3½ to 4 cups (438 to 500 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
2¼ teaspoons (7 grams) instant yeast
2¼ teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt, divided
¾ teaspoon (1 gram) ground nutmeg, divided
1¼ cups (300 grams) prepared eggnog
¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature* and divided
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
1½ tablespoons (9 grams) ground cinnamon
Eggnog-Rum Glaze (recipe follows)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 1½ cups (188 grams) flour, granulated sugar, yeast, 2 teaspoons (6 grams) salt, and ¼ teaspoon nutmeg at low speed just until combined.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat eggnog and ½ cup (113 grams) butter over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add warm eggnog mixture to flour mixture; beat at medium-low speed for 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg; beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. With mixer on low speed, gradually add 2 cups (250 grams) flour, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at medium-low speed until a soft, elastic dough forms, 6 to 10 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook; add up to remaining ½ cup (62 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if dough is too sticky. Check dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. (See Note.)
4. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour.
5. Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
6. In a small bowl, stir together brown sugar, cinnamon, remaining ½ teaspoon (1 gram) nutmeg, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt.
7. Lightly punch down dough. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and roll into an 18x12-inch rectangle. Using a large offset spatula, spread remaining ¼ cup (57 grams) butter onto dough, leaving a ½-inch border on one long side. Sprinkle brown sugar mixture over butter. Starting with long side opposite border, roll up dough, jelly roll style, pinching seam to seal. Gently shape to 18 inches long and more even thickness, if necessary. Using a serrated knife, slice log into 12 rolls (about 1½ inches thick), trimming edges slightly if necessary. Place rolls, cut side down, in prepared pan. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
8. Let rolls rise, covered, in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until nearly doubled in size and dough holds an indentation when poked, 3 to 4 hours. (See PRO TIP.)
9. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
10. Bake until rolls are lightly golden and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 15 to 20 minutes, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Spread Eggnog-Rum Glaze onto warm rolls. Serve warm.

**Unlike softened butter, room temperature butter should provide no resistance when pressed with a finger. At this point, the butter is softened enough to easily melt as well as spread over dough.*

Note: *To use the windowpane test to check dough for proper gluten development, lightly flour hands and pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute, and test again.*

PRO TIP

To help next-day rolls proof, especially if your house tends to be quite cool, uncover refrigerated rolls and place in a cold oven with a small saucepan of boiling water to create a warm, steamy environment. (Keep oven door closed.) Allow rolls to proof until nearly doubled in size and dough holds an indentation when poked. Rewarm hot water as needed.

Eggnog-Rum Glaze

Makes about 1 cup

2½ cups (300 grams) confectioners' sugar
3 tablespoons (45 grams) prepared eggnog
1½ tablespoons (22.5 grams) spiced rum
2 tablespoons (28 grams) unsalted butter, melted
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1. In a medium bowl, stir together all ingredients until smooth and well combined. Use immediately.

Make-Ahead Timeline

1 DAY BEFORE:
- Make dough.
- Proof dough, 40 minutes to 1 hour.
- Roll out, fill, and cut dough into rolls.
- Place in prepared pan, and refrigerate overnight.

DAY OF:
- Proof dough, 3 to 4 hours.
- Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
- Bake for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Let cool in pan for 10 minutes.
- Make Eggnog-Rum Glaze.
- Spread glaze onto rolls.
- Enjoy!

WHITE CHOCOLATE-PEPPERMINT SCONES

Makes 6 scones

Perhaps our easiest and most straightforward make-ahead recipe, these peppermint-and-white chocolate scones offer a fabulously festive breakfast with minimal effort. On Christmas Eve, you can pull together the dough in a flash before popping it into the freezer. The morning of, it'll go from freezer directly to preheated oven, with only a brush of cream in between. Then, you're only a quick Vanilla Glaze drizzle away from your fastest, sweetest holiday breakfast.

- **2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **¼ cup (57 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- **¾ cup (180 grams) cold heavy whipping cream, plus more for brushing**
- **1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract***
- **3 ounces (85 grams) white chocolate*, finely chopped (about ½ cup)**
- **½ cup (64 grams) crushed soft peppermint candies***
- **White sparkling sugar, for sprinkling**
- **Vanilla Glaze (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: crushed soft peppermint candies**

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
3. In a small bowl, stir together cold cream, vanilla bean paste, and peppermint extract. Gradually add cream mixture to flour mixture, stirring with a fork until dry ingredients are moistened. Gently stir in white chocolate and candies. (Dough will be quite crumbly or shaggy in parts.)
4. Turn out dough onto a clean surface; gently knead 8 to 10 times to bring dough together. Roll or pat dough into a 7-inch circle (about 1 inch thick), very lightly flouring surface as needed to prevent sticking; press together any cracks that form, if necessary. Using a bench scraper or a thin-bladed knife, cut circle into 6 wedges; place wedges at least 2 inches apart on prepared pan. Wrap pan tightly with plastic wrap, and freeze overnight.
5. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
6. Brush tops of scones with cream; sprinkle with sparkling sugar.
7. Bake until lightly golden and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 22 to 27 minutes.
8. Spoon Vanilla Glaze into a small pastry or resealable plastic bag; cut a ¼-inch opening in tip or corner. Drizzle glaze onto scones as desired. Garnish with candies, if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**We used Nielsen-Massey Pure Peppermint Extract and Ghirardelli White Chocolate Baking Bars. Do not substitute hard peppermint candies.*

VANILLA GLAZE

Makes about ⅓ cup

- **⅔ cup (80 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **2½ tablespoons (37.5 grams) heavy whipping cream**
- **½ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In a small bowl, stir together all ingredients until smooth and well combined. Use immediately.

Make-Ahead Timeline

1 DAY BEFORE:

- Make dough.
- Cut into wedges, and place on pan.
- Wrap pan tightly, and freeze overnight.

DAY OF:

- Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
- Brush scones with cream; sprinkle with sparkling sugar.
- Bake for 22 to 27 minutes.
- Make Vanilla Glaze.
- Drizzle glaze onto baked scones.
- Enjoy!

SIGNED, SEALED *delivered*

IN THE YEAR OF SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINES, AND TRAVEL BANS, NEVER HAS A SWEET CARE PACKAGE TO OR FROM A LOVED ONE BEEN MORE PRECIOUS. THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, EMBRACE THE POWER OF THE POSTAL SERVICE AND BAKE ONE OF THESE FOUR DESSERTS DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF SHIPPING—WITHOUT SACRIFICING LOOKS OR FLAVOR.

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY TRICIA MANZANERO
STYLING BY DOROTHY WALTON

PLEASE HANDLE WITH
PLEASE HANDLE WITH
FRAG FRA

Chocolate-Peanut Butter-Pistachio Biscotti
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PACKAGE YOUR CHOCOLATE-PEANUT BUTTER-PISTACHIO BISCOTTI:
In a large tin or bakery box lined with parchment paper, line up biscotti in rows, packing as tightly as you can. If you have room to stack another row of biscotti, place a piece of parchment paper or wax paper between the two layers for protection.

PACKAGE YOUR SLICE-AND-BAKE HOLIDAY CONFETTI COOKIES:

Fill a large tin or bakery box with a thin layer of crumpled wax paper, crinkle paper, or bubble wrap. Stack your cookies three or four at a time in plastic bags or muffin liners on top of the insulated layer. If there are any gaps or empty spaces between the stacks, fill them with more crumpled wax paper, crinkle paper, or bubble wrap. Seal container.

e-and-Bake Holiday
onfetti Cookies

PACKAGE YOUR CHOCOLATE DULCE DE LECHE BARS:
Wrap the individual bars in parchment paper, plastic wrap, or wax paper, fastened with twine or tape if necessary. Place wrapped bars in a tin or bakery box, packing them tightly together so there is little wiggle room.
Chocolate-Dulce de Leche Bars
page 103

Pearl Sugar Ginger Cookies
page 104

PACKAGE YOUR PEARL SUGAR GINGER COOKIES:

Stack your cookies four to six at a time in cylindrical plastic bags, sealing with a twist tie or twine. In a large tin or bakery box, place a layer of crumpled wax paper, crinkle paper, packing peanuts, or bubble wrap. Place sealed bags on top of insulated layer, filling any gaps or empty spaces with more crumpled wax paper, crinkle paper, packing peanuts, or bubble wrap.
Seal container.

STEP ONE: BOX IT UP.
Buy a box bigger than your baked goods package—at least 2 inches greater in length, width, and height. Use packing peanuts, bubble wrap, or brown packing paper to stuff a nice 2-inch layer in the bottom of your box. Place your package of treats in the center of the box, and fill up any remaining space with more packing peanuts, bubble wrap, or packing paper. This creates an extra layer of insulation and cushion from outside weather and rough handling.

STEP TWO: TAPE IT UP.
It may seem over the top, but taping over all the slits of the mailing box will keep outside air from getting to your goodies. The less air exposure, the better the taste. Bonus points: slap a "fragile" sticker onto your package so handlers know your box contains precious cargo.

STEP THREE: MAIL IT OUT.
All of these goodies stay relatively fresh for a week, so most of them can be mailed out with regular five-day shipping; just double-check with your carrier service to make sure they can get your cookies to the intended recipient in time. If it'll be too long, go ahead and spring for priority mail or two-day shipping. You don't want your hard work arriving stale!

SLICE-AND-BAKE HOLIDAY CONFETTI COOKIES

Makes about 50 cookies

Slice-and-bake cookies are easy to make and easier to ship. Packed with holiday nonpareils and glistening with sparkling sugar, this recipe makes enough to fill several care packages.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract*
- ½ teaspoon (2 grams) almond extract
- 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- ⅓ cup (70 grams) holiday nonpareils
- ½ cup (112 grams) white sparkling sugar, plus more for sprinkling
- 1 large egg (50 grams), lightly beaten

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in extracts.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined. Fold in nonpareils. (Dough will be rather soft at this point.) Divide dough in half. Shape each half into a 7-inch-long log (about 2 inches thick). Wrap each log in plastic wrap; holding ends of plastic wrap, roll log over work surface, creating a more rounded shape. Refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours. (See Note.)
3. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line 2 to 3 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. In a large rimmed baking dish or plate, place sparkling sugar. Working with one dough log at a time, unwrap log, and brush outside with egg; roll in sparkling sugar. Working in batches and using a serrated knife, cut logs crosswise into ¼-inch-thick rounds, and place 1 to 1¼ inches apart on prepared pans; flatten rounds slightly so they lay flush on baking sheet. (If dough rounds crack when flattening, simply press and smooth back together.) Sprinkle tops with sparkling sugar.
5. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are lightly golden, about 15 minutes. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes. Using a large offset or flat metal spatula, remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

**We used Heilala Pure Vanilla Extract.*

Note: *Let dough that has been refrigerated for longer time spans stand at room temperature until slightly softened and easier to slice, 15 to 30 minutes.*

CHOCOLATE-DULCE DE LECHE BARS

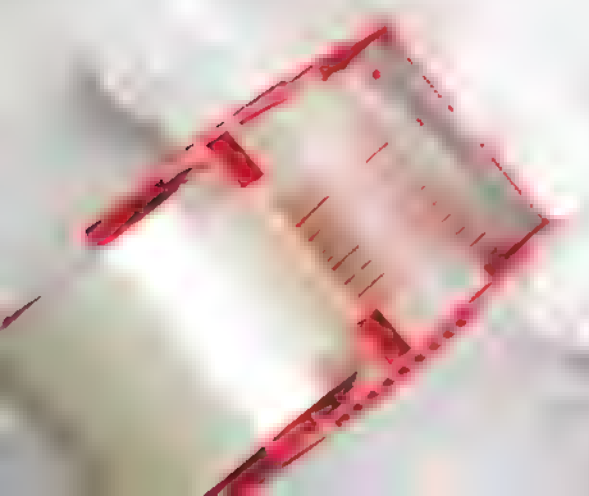
Makes 24 bars

Based on the classic caramelitas, these buttery, nutty oat bars have a rich chocolate filling punctuated by dulce de leche. With a firm streusel-like base and topping protecting the gooey middle, these bars travel exceptionally well and will be equally well-received.

- 1¼ cups (156 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (8 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 cup (90 grams) quick-cooking oats
- ¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled for 5 minutes
- 1½ teaspoons (6 grams) tightly packed orange zest
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅔ cup (75 grams) chopped toasted pecans
- ¾ cup (128 grams) roughly chopped 66% cacao dark chocolate*, divided
- ¾ cup (128 grams) roughly chopped milk chocolate*, divided
- ¾ cup (224 grams) dulce de leche

Garnish: flaked sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a large bowl, stir together 1¼ cups



(156 grams) flour, oats, brown sugar, melted butter, orange zest, baking soda, kosher salt, cinnamon, and cloves until well combined. Press half of dough (about 293 grams) into bottom of prepared pan.
3. Bake until lightly golden around edges, about 10 minutes. Let cool in pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Leave oven on.
4. Sprinkle pecans, ½ cup (85 grams) dark chocolate, and ½ cup (85 grams) milk chocolate onto prepared crust.
5. In a small microwave-safe bowl, stir together dulce de leche and remaining 1 tablespoon (8 grams) flour. Heat on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until mixture can be drizzled from a spoon. Drizzle mixture onto pecans and chocolate in pan, leaving a ½-inch border around edges of pan. Crumble remaining dough evenly over dulce de leche layer. (It's OK if some peeks through.) Top evenly with remaining ¼ cup (43 grams) dark chocolate and remaining ¼ cup (43 grams) milk chocolate.
6. Bake until chocolate is melted and crumble layer starts to turn golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Using a serrated knife, cut into bars. Garnish with sea salt, if desired. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

**We used Valrhona Caraïbe 66% Cacao Dark Chocolate Baking Fèves and Callebaut Milk Chocolate Baking Blocks.*

PEARL SUGAR GINGER COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies

Pearl sugar saves the day again with these beautiful, polka-dotted ginger cookies. Acting as gorgeous decoration and a protective crunchy layer, pearl sugar helps make sure the cookies arrive to your far-flung loved ones in serious style. The molasses also helps the cookies stay fresher for longer, as the hygroscopic sugar keeps them moist.

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) lemon zest
- ⅓ cup (113 grams) molasses (not blackstrap)
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
- ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves
- ½ cup (104 grams) Swedish pearl sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and lemon zest at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add molasses and egg; beat until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, ginger, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. Add flour mixture to butter mixture all at once; beat at low speed until combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
4. In a small shallow bowl, place pearl sugar.
5. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 30 grams each), and roll into balls. Roll dough balls in pearl sugar (see Note), and place 1¾ to 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake, one batch at a time, until cookies appear cracked and edges are just set but centers look slightly underdone, about 10 minutes. Let cool on pan for 4 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Note: *If pearl sugar isn't sticking as well, lightly dampen hands with water before rolling dough into balls and coating in sugar.*

MATERIALS TO HAVE ON HAND

COOKIE TIN
BAKERY BOX
PLASTIC WRAP
KITCHEN TWINE
PLASTIC BAGS
MUFFIN LINERS
WAX PAPER
PARCHMENT PAPER
BUBBLE WRAP
PACKING PEANUTS
BROWN PACKING PAPER
PACKING TAPE
SHIPPING BOX

CHOCOLATE-PEANUT BUTTER-PISTACHIO BISCOTTI

Makes about 36 biscotti

Crisp biscotti is a shipping dream, with a long shelf life and a rigid shape that can handle the long, bumpy road ahead. Our chocolate-peanut butter combo is made all the more decadent by the addition of yuletide-green pistachios. Consider mailing these babies with your favorite brand of coffee—the two are natural companions and make for a complete package.

- 6 ounces (170 grams) 64% cacao semisweet chocolate*, finely chopped and divided
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- 1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup (70 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder, sifted
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (1 gram) instant espresso powder*
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
- ½ cup (82 grams) peanut butter chips
- ½ cup (66 grams) roasted pistachios, roughly chopped

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In the top of a double boiler, place 4 ounces (113 grams) chocolate. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until melted and smooth. Remove from heat; set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs and vanilla; beat until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add melted chocolate, beating until well combined.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, espresso powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Fold in peanut butter chips, pistachios, and remaining 2 ounces (57 grams) chocolate.
5. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and divide in half. Shape each half into a 9x3-inch loaf, and place 2 to 2½ inches apart on prepared pan.
6. Bake until set and loaves spring back when touched, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool on pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F (150°C).
7. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
8. Place 1 cooled loaf on a cutting board. Using a serrated knife, cut crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices. Gently place, cut side down, ½ to ¾ inch apart on prepared pans. Repeat with remaining loaf.
9. Bake, one batch at a time, until cut sides feel toasted and mostly dry, about 25 minutes, turning slices halfway through baking. Let cool on pan for 2 minutes. Carefully remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. (Biscotti will continue to crisp as they cool.) Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

**We used Guittard 64% Cacao Semisweet Baking Chocolate Bars and Williams Sonoma Espresso Powder.*

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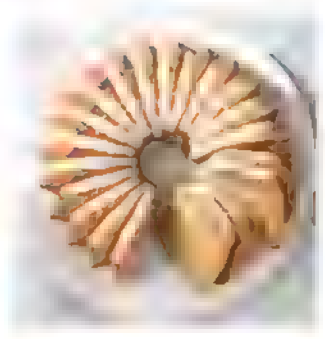

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origin of a classic

Kugelhopf

THE STORY OF THE *KUGELHOPF*, A RICH, BRIOCHE-LIKE CAKE WITH AMARETTO-SOAKED RAISINS, HAS AS MANY CURVES AS ITS BEAUTIFUL, ICONIC PAN

BY SANDI SHRIVER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BATHIE
FOOD STYLING BY KATHLEEN KANEN / STYLING BY CAROLINE BLUM

Resembling an edible coronet adorned with glistening almonds and amaretto-plumped golden raisins, the *kugelhopf* is a majestic cake. The delicate crumb, lighter than air and reminiscent of tender brioche, is the product of the unusual addition of baker's yeast—creating a bread-meets-cake hybrid. The sugary dough, enriched with eggs and pads of creamy, golden butter, undergoes a single rise in a tall, fluted tube pan before baking. The resultant kugelhopf cake is tall and splendidly contoured, and the final dusting of confectioners' sugar enhances each distinct curve.

Unsurprisingly, the earliest kugelhopf was made popular by royalty. When kugelhopf first made its appearance in the 16th century, the addition of butter and sugar to cakes was a luxury reserved for the wealthy upper class. As copious amounts of butter and sugar are key to the classic kugelhopf recipe, the cake was most often served in palaces and at regal banquets. Austrian-born Marie Antoinette frequently requested this decadent cake during her reign in France. In the late 1800s, Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria was also a devout fan of kugelhopf. When he visited the countryside, his mistress could be found baking up homemade kugelhopf, and he would rarely go a morning without the rich treat. Word of the cake even made its way to Polish ruler King Stanislas Leszczynski, who was rumored to have invented a rum-soaked version called baba au rhum. Hopefully, this cake made his exile in France more bearable.

Although made fashionable by French, Austrian, and Polish royalty, exactly which culture can lay claim to the kugelhopf crown remains a hotly contested debate. The name itself has Germanic origins and is thought to refer to a type of hood called *gugels*, popular in medieval Germany. The second part of the word, *hopf*, meaning "to jump" or "to hop," likely describes the rising of the cake caused by both the gluten formation in the dough and the leavening action of the yeast. Coming to popularity long before chemical leavening agents even existed, the kugelhopf may be one of the first cakes that utilized yeast to create a light and airy texture. The other available option was to use whipped egg whites, as in a classic sponge cake. However, this method wasn't popular until the invention of mechanized eggbeaters in the 1800s. As German monks were experts in brewing and manipulating the then-invisible yeast to create their ales, it seems possible that the kugelhopf would have been crafted with their masterful hands.

Looking at the boundaries of European countries in the 16th century, it makes sense that the Alsace region of France—hugging the German border—also calls this confection their own. Their version, *kouglof*, is shaped to resemble a different kind of headgear: the hats worn by the biblical three wise men. According to lore, while passing through on their long journey from Bethlehem, the three wise men grew tired. Luckily, a hospitable Alsatian sheltered them for a night, and the three men thanked him graciously by gifting him a cake in the shape of their hats. Even in the modern age, these delectable "hats" are adored countrywide and commonly consumed on Sundays for breakfast or brunch.

Austria, a country that also borders Germany, has ties to the kugelhopf (gugelhupf to Austrians), too. On May 9, 2006, gugelhupf was the Austrian entry in Sweet Europe, a presentation during Café Europe, a cultural initiative of the Austrian presidency of the European Union. Historical accounts claim the cake was created to fit a specific celebratory pan, developed after the Viennese victory against the Turks during the 1683 Battle of Vienna. The pan, turban-shaped to memorialize the win, led to the birth of the now iconic crown-shaped cake. Interestingly enough, there are similar tales that this significant win led to the invention of both croissants and bagels. The first Viennese coffeehouse, fueled by bags of Turkish coffee, was opened in 1685, after the battle, and perhaps helped to further introduce kugelhopf to the common people.

Whether this coveted creation was conceived by hooded monks in Germany in the 16th century, gifted long ago by the three wise men, or invented to celebrate victorious Vienna in 1683, one thing is for sure—the semisweet, yeasted kugelhopf and the tall, circular pan revolutionized the baking world. The ingenuity was hidden within a high-capacity pan that circumvented a soggy center. Because the central tube allowed heat to come into direct contact with the middle of the cake, relatively large cakes could be baked thoroughly. The ornate swirls and spirals of the pan also made for a stunning appearance. Traditionally crafted from earthenware—an ode to its bread-like origins—the pans were often glazed on the inside and left natural on the exterior. Other, more ornate pans were glazed entirely and painted with bold colors. Although charming, the clay used to make the pans was particularly fragile, and the bakeware was known to crack or break after repeated use.

Fortunately, one particular kugelhopf pan managed to survive migration to the United States, where it would—literally—shape a piece of American history. The pan had been inherited by a member of a Jewish women's group in Minneapolis, Minnesota, home to bakeware manufacturer Nordic Ware. The group often made large cakes for sharing, called *bundkuchen*, and found that the design of the heirloom pan was superior for these large cakes. The circular design held a greater volume, baked evenly, and boasted an eye-catching fluted shape. In 1949, the women approached Nordic Ware founder Dave Dalquist with a design request: recreate the kugelhopf pan using modern material. Nordic Ware welcomed the challenge, and the Bundt pan we all know and love was born.

Predecessor to the Bundt and coveted by royalty, the kugelhopf is no doubt a cake for celebration. Its richness is refined without being overly sweet, and the flavors blend deliciously with a warm cup of coffee or tea. The addition of dried fruits soaked in luscious liqueur, from almond-scented amaretto to tart cherry kirsch, creates a festive tone. Almonds, a German holiday favorite, add nutty depth and charm while orange zest perfumes the delicate crumb. The only additional adornment needed for this beautifully crowned cake is a generous snowfall of confectioners' sugar. If you're looking to celebrate this holiday season with a cake as rich in tradition as it is in flavor, consider the kugelhopf your edible entry into history.

Kugelhopf

Makes 1 (10-cup) kugelhopf

Our brioche-like cake gets an aromatic boost from orange zest and amaretto-soaked raisins. A final dusting of confectioners' sugar over the sliced almonds resembles fresh snow fallen on a shingled roof. Yet under it all, the elegant crown shape reigns supreme—rivaled by none.

3½ cups (438 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
⅓ cup (67 grams) plus ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar, divided
½ cup (120 grams) plus ⅓ cup (80 grams) warm whole milk (110°F/43°C to 115°F/46°C), divided
2¼ teaspoons (7 grams) active dry yeast
¼ cup (60 grams) amaretto
1 cup (128 grams) golden raisins
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature*
1 tablespoon (15 grams) tightly packed orange zest
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
¾ teaspoon (3 grams) almond extract
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
⅓ cup (38 grams) sliced almonds
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together ¾ cup (94 grams) flour and ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together ½ cup (120 grams) warm milk and yeast until yeast dissolves. Add yeast mixture to flour mixture, and whisk by hand until smooth and well combined. Cover and let stand until bubbles form, about 30 minutes.
3. In a small saucepan, heat amaretto over medium-low heat until steaming. (Do not boil.) Remove from heat, and add raisins; cover and let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain.
4. Add butter, orange zest, salt, almond extract, cinnamon, vanilla, and remaining ⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar to flour mixture. Using the paddle attachment, beat at medium-low speed until combined. Beat in eggs. With mixer on low speed, gradually add remaining 2¾ cups (344 grams) flour in three additions alternately with remaining ⅓ cup (80 grams) warm milk, beginning and ending with flour, beating just until combined after each addition. Increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until smooth, shiny, and elastic and dough pulls completely away from sides of bowl, about 9 minutes. (It is best not to stop mixing during this time). Scrape paddle; add raisins, and beat at low speed just until combined.
5. Spray a 10-cup kugelhopf pan with baking spray with flour. Sprinkle bottom and sides of pan with almonds; using a wooden pick, move almonds around to fill any holes.
6. Using lightly floured hands or a bowl scraper, pinch off small pieces of dough, and place in prepared pan. Using lightly floured fingers, press dough even and flat. Gently tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter a few times. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until dough almost reaches top of pan, 1½ to 2 hours.
7. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
8. Bake until golden and an instant-read thermometer inserted near center registers 190°F (88°C), 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Invert kugelhopf onto a wire rack, and let cool completely. Before serving, using a fine-mesh sieve, lightly dust with confectioners' sugar.

**Unlike softened butter, room temperature butter should provide no resistance when pressed with a finger. At this point, the butter is softened enough to easily incorporate into this dough.*

Gingerbread Dutch Baby Pancake

OUR SPICED DUTCH BABY PANCAKE OFFERS ALL OF THE PLEASURE OF A PANCAKE BREAKFAST WITH HALF THE EFFORT. MADE IN A BLENDER AND BAKED OFF IN A CAST-IRON SKILLET, THIS IS THE SWEETEST, FASTEST WAY TO MAKE A FESTIVE DISH DURING THE BUSY WEEKNIGHT HOLIDAY HUSTLE.

GINGERBREAD DUTCH BABY PANCAKE

Makes 4 servings

Classic Dutch baby pancakes are like the decadent hybrid of a popover and a pancake. The batter comes together in a blender—no stand mixer required—and then gets baked in a piping-hot buttered skillet. Rich enough to be served for a holiday breakfast or festive weeknight dessert, our gingerbread version is warmly spiced and packs a hint of molasses. We finished it all off with a dollop of lemony whipped cream, maple syrup, and a scattering of ruby red pomegranate arils.

- ¾ cup (180 grams) whole milk, room temperature
- ½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- 2 tablespoons (28 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1¾ teaspoons (3.5 grams) ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon (1 gram) instant espresso powder*
- 1 teaspoon (7 grams) molasses (not blackstrap)
- ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (240 grams) cold heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons (14 grams) confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon (4 grams) packed lemon zest
- Maple syrup, to serve
- Garnish: confectioners' sugar, pomegranate arils

1. Place a 10-inch cast-iron skillet in oven. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).
2. In the container of a blender (see Note), combine milk, flour, eggs, brown sugar, ginger, espresso powder, molasses, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, and salt; process until smooth and well combined, stopping to scrape sides of container as needed. (Batter will be thin.)
3. Remove hot skillet from oven. Add butter, and let melt, brushing all over bottom and up sides of skillet. Carefully pour batter into hot skillet.
4. Bake until golden brown and puffed, about 20 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F (150°C), and bake for 5 minutes more.
5. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine cold cream, confectioners' sugar, and lemon zest; whisk until stiff peaks form.
6. Serve Dutch baby immediately with whipped cream and maple syrup. Garnish with confectioners' sugar and pomegranate arils, if desired.

**We used Williams Sonoma Espresso Powder.*

Note: *A food processor can also be used. If you don't have either at your disposal, you can also whisk the batter together by hand until smooth and well combined.*

Poignant Pound Cake

RENOWNED CHEF AND TV STAR CARLA HALL RECALLS HER ADOLESCENCE ENJOYING HER GRANDMOTHER'S CHOCOLATE POUND CAKE—AND HOW A VINTAGE COOKBOOK HELPED UNLOCK ITS SECRETS MANY YEARS LATER

My memories of my granny's five-flavor pound cake may be almost as centered around eating it as baking it. Granny used to make this pound cake for every celebration we had when I was growing up, but it was also the type of cake she would bake and send to us when we went away to college.

"Unboxing" was actually a trend Granny may have started all of those years ago. When a pound cake arrived at my dorm, it would be wrapped in many, many—this is not an exaggeration, there were so many—layers of wax paper and then brown paper and then a paper bag and then the actual box. It took 20 minutes to open a pound cake from Granny. But the payoff started when you got down to the last one or two layers and the smell would waft out and I would be transported right home. I would find a quiet corner in my room and open it slowly so that by the time I got to the last few layers, anyone with too much curiosity would have given up and walked away. Then I could relish those flavors all by myself.

When I began working in restaurants in my thirties, I was able to bake Granny's pound cakes in chocolate form as one of the dessert options for my customers. But I was struggling to get the right texture her cakes always seemed to have. Luckily, I found my answer in an old cookbook from the 1930s. I found a method for baking cakes that entailed starting with a cold oven rather than a preheated one. I tried it with my pound cake and found that it was the trick to creating a crumb that had the same wonderful texture that Granny's cakes always had.

—Carla Hall, chef, cookbook author, and cohost of *The Chew*

ILLUSTRATION BY KELLY REDDING

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